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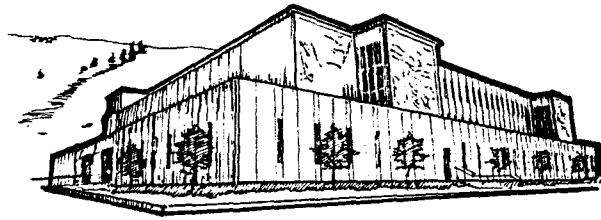
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Revising Palimpsest:
Narrative and History in the Postmodern Novel

by
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A.B., Princeton University, 1990

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
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1993

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Revising Palimpsest: Narrative and History in the Postmodern Novel (105 pp)

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Working through close readings of three representative novels from different cultures, this thesis explores the way in which contemporary fiction interrogates widely accepted notions of history as an objective discipline. Drawing from works by historical theorist Hayden White and literary scholars Linda Hutcheon and Fredric Jameson, it finds that postmodern novels demonstrate the ideological nature of narrative which precludes objectivity and emphasizes the arbitrariness of cultural formation as expressed in literature.

In Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, historical knowledge emerges over a century's worth of "history" not as a matter of events in a linear sequence but as an engagement in the discussion about those events. There is no conclusive truth to be found outside a text in history; rather, the novel reveals history as an object for individual memory and verbal transmission so that different versions of history represent the viewpoints of the individuals creating them. Milorad Pavic's *Dictionary of the Khazars* evades linear sequence by constructing its story through encyclopedic entries, thus breaking down conventional notions of narrative and forcing the reader to create his/her own interpretation of the events depicted. Moreover, three sections--Christian, Islamic, and Jewish--relate very different versions of the same events. In each case, the ideological framework of each religion privileges its own value system and denigrates the others. Finally, Angela Carter's *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* presents an individual who comes into conflict with the dominant ideology as he moves through history. The novel stresses the conflict between a person changing perception over time and static visions of history that ideologies foist upon their adherents.

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I. Introduction

In the three decades since "postmodernism" emerged as a term, critics from a variety of schools and disciplines have attempted to define the term, or at the very least, describe the culture associated with it. In the dazzling array of cultural output made possible by technological advances and the explosion of critical theory from every corner of the western world, the postmodern eludes generalization of the sort necessary in the creation of a periodizing model. In addition to the social complexity born of this wild cultural expansion, periodizing the present represents at best a herculean task along the same lines as lifting yourself up in the air by your own collar, placing the postmodern beyond the firm grasp of a totalizing inclusion within a finite definition or model by critics working within this culture. It follows naturally that these critics have failed to achieve even the vaguest sort of consensus necessary to consider postmodernism defined. Frustrating as it may seem, the postmodern exists as a field independent of individual minds within it, even as those minds encounter and live within it everyday.

Facing this dilemma head on, Fredric Jameson, in the introduction to his book, Postmodernism or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism, seeks only "to offer a

periodizing hypothesis, and that at a moment in which the very conception of historical periodization has come to seem most problematical indeed" (Jameson [1991] 3).¹ Jameson's hypothesis, however, does not descend to a reductionist attempt to define what Michel Foucault might call an *episteme*, or to an over-generalized, totalizing definition of an era at least as complex as any that has preceded us. Rather, Jameson offers a theory for locating ourselves both within our own time and within the broader stream of history to explore both individual experience and the past with whatever resources we have. In other words, we must never ignore the diachronic nature of history in our attempts to examine periods arbitrarily sliced from history's continuum and isolated under an institutional microscope.

Because the study of aesthetic artifacts is well established, literary texts offer critics a facile way to explore the relation between history and cultural output. Unlike recently developed media such as photography and video, novels have been a cultural staple at least as far back as Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quixote* and so present a large body of material to study. Moreover, fiction incorporates many voices and ideologies. As Mikhail Bakhtin puts it in his essay "Discourse in the Novel," "the novel as a whole is a

phenomenon multiform in style and variform in speech and voice" (Bakhtin 261). In that piece, Bakhtin goes on to describe how novels assimilate and depict a wide range of characters:

These distinctive links and interrelationships between utterances and languages, this movement of theme through different languages and speech types, its dispersion into the rivulets and droplets of social heteroglossia, its dialogization--this is the basic distinguishing feature of the stylistics of the novel (Bakhtin 263).

With its inherent heteroglossia, novelistic discourse allows for a more complete representation of a given cultural moment than any other form, presenting the ideological conflicts that take place in any society between different classes or groups.

In this model, other genres like philosophical tracts, political manifestos, and even poetry present only one voice speaking from one ideological viewpoint. One such monoglossic form of particular note, the historical narrative, claims its authority from an "objective" study of reality. In developing history as a discipline, historians have created a need for narrativizing events to reveal the meaning they impose on events. Contemporary historical theorist Hayden

White explores the relation of historiography to its narrative representation in the essay "The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality":

The authority of the historical narrative is the authority of reality itself; the historical account endows this reality with form and thereby makes it desirable by the imposition upon its processes of the formal coherency that only stories possess (White 20).

In the postmodern era, then, theory has begun to interrogate underlying assumptions about the representation of history.

It is no wonder that postmodern novels have also taken up this concern, for, as Linda Hutcheon points out in her essay "Historicizing the Postmodern," contemporary novels assimilate such theoretical concerns:

Historical accounts and literary interpretations are equally determined by underlying theoretical assumptions. And in postmodern fiction too, theory interpenetrates with narrative and diachrony is reinserted into synchrony, though not in any simplistic way: the problematic concept of historical knowledge and the semiotic notion of language as a social contract are reinscribed in

the metafictionally self-conscious and self-regulating signifying system of literature. This is the paradox of postmodernism, be it in theory, history, or artistic practice (Hutcheon 99).

Postmodern novels, then, use their heteroglossic tools to explore the ramifications of narrativizing events without resorting to an authoritarian position regarding history.

In setting out an interpretive strategy for the study of novels in his essay "On Interpretation," Fredric Jameson offers a way to conjoin novelistic heteroglossia with the postmodern novel's theoretical activity. He asserts that novels display the ongoing, ideological conflict between classes as it occurs in the moment, culturally speaking, of a given novel's generation:

...it is no longer construed as an individual "text" or work in the narrow sense, but has been reconstituted in the form of the great collective and class discourses of which a text is little more than an individual parole or utterance (Jameson [1981] 76).

Jameson's model, however, does not address the multiplicity of postmodernism in which the ideologies at work relate to more than class or economic factors. Postmodern novels also take issues like gender and ethnicity into consideration in their interrogation of

knowledge. Such texts see the relation of individual subjects to their society as a whole as much more than a function of their economic position. Postmodern novels explore the variety of ways in which we interact with and resist the culture around us.

Notes

1. Ironically enough, Jameson, himself, has been actively involved in the movement calling into question the notion of historical periodization in cultural studies in the first place. Most notable in his engagement with this project, Jameson's *The Political Unconscious* placed the notion of an eternal "metanarrative" of class discourse against any one clearly defined period's literary/artistic production, thereby exposing the artificial nature of examining texts as unique, self-contained entities. His return, then, to a need for periods implied in the term "periodizing hypothesis" indicates both a step forward toward defining a new kind of history within the old model and a step back in its reliance on that model.

II. "Time Passes But Not So Much": Narrative and History in Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*

Historiographic metafiction as delineated by Linda Hutcheon in *A Poetics of Postmodernism* does not totalize or introduce a new paradigm. Rather, it sets up internal contestation between narrative as an imaginary act and historical knowledge. When they exist in the same sphere on equal footing, narrative works against history in determining the "truth" about a given series of events:

Historiographic metafiction refutes the natural or common sense methods of distinguishing between historical fact and fiction. It refuses the view that only history has a truth claim, both by questioning the ground of that claim in historiography and by asserting that both history and fiction are discourses, human constructs, signifying systems, and both derive their major claim to truth from that identity. (Hutcheon 93)

This model of narrative does not simply reduce imaginative acts and history to the level of play for its own sake, but also raises serious questions about the nature of knowledge and event. Although the questions remain unresolved, postmodern fiction brings its readers into its "critical reworking" of knowledge (Hutcheon 4).

Historiographic metafiction, then, takes on a huge

epistemological task. It makes problematic the relation of knowledge to event, as it makes individual narrative as significant as empirical consensus in building meaning. Any narrative representation, with all its idiosyncrasies, allows the past to be a part of the present. Knowledge of the past is critical to our understanding of the world, and narrative, in structuring that knowledge and encoding the meaning of past time, carries the past into the present. Postmodern narratives differ from older modes by making that point consciously:

Historiographic metafiction reminds us that, while events did occur in the real empirical past, we name and constitute those events as historical facts by selection and narrative positioning. And, even more basically, we only know of those past events through their discursive inscription, through their traces in the present. (Hutcheon 97)

Postmodern novels make clear the selection process that goes on in narrativizing events. Instead of referring to a false sense of an empirically derived sequence, they actively place events in a discursive context, in narrative, and illustrate that only in narrative traces does the past enter the present.

Although she often refers to *One Hundred Years of Solitude* as a major, and perhaps even the primary, example of "historiographic metafiction," Hutcheon prefers to let

reference, rather than interpretation of the text work through her theory of postmodern fiction. The novel fits her model of an aesthetic of internal contestation to a tee, yet she never explores the extent to which it does so, preferring the oblique reference that "Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* has often been discussed in exactly the contradictory terms that I think define postmodernism" and brief, isolated discussions of parts of the novel (5).¹ The novel, however, offers myriad examples of the tension between narrative and knowledge, and can be used as a practical model for demonstrating the mutual interrogation between narrative and historiography within historiographic metafiction.²

As such, the novel does not deny western historiography so much as extend the boundaries of its possibilities and place the history of person or family in direct conflict with that of society as perceived through empirical lenses. Marquez's novel contests the limits that the modern age places on possibility through scientific or empirical thought, extending history's grasp into the world of narrative experience. Usually located under the rubric of "Magic Realism," the novel contains its own world in the imaginary--but all too "real"--town of Macondo, a microcosm with its own operating procedures. Of course, that moniker itself, belies our western sense that events which we cannot verify through empirical/scientific means could never quite be

realistic. By attaching "magic" to the name, the whole genre, generally coming out of non-european literatures, is displaced or marginalized as we amend not the concept of what is real itself, but a narrative that defines a different epistemological mode.

As a case in point, we would not expect anything super- or extra- "natural" with the passing of one biologically ordinary man whose very mortality speaks to his unexceptional nature; José Arcadio is, finally, just a man. The text, however, works under its own rules, so that when that first Buendía, Macondo's founding father and mad patriarch, dies,

...they saw a light rain of tiny yellow flowers falling. They fell on the town all through the night in a silent storm, and they covered the roofs and blocked the doors and smothered the animals who slept outdoors. So many flowers fell from the sky that in the morning the streets were carpeted with a compact cushion and they had to clear them away with shovels and rakes so that the funeral procession could pass by. (137)³

This world presents a kind of excess, a level of reality we seldom glimpse in our urban, industrial world. In this instance, the death of a character made significant through his family's place at the center of the narrative takes on added meaning as the unusual, to say the least, storm of yellow flowers accompanies José Arcadio's death. In this narrative, the environment somehow reflects the numinous

quality of events which take place within it, signaling their occurrence. Nothing of the sort happens in the "real" world. No super-natural responses follow the passing of monarchs, presidents, or generals, but, within this narrative, such a reaction occurs as a natural consequence of things.⁴ This kind of obvious connection between significant event and an environmental response allows reader and character alike to recognize, to know, what events take on added meaning over the course of the novel. Both readers and Buendías may not be able to determine a hierarchy of significance between this flood of flowers and, for example, the innumerable yellow butterflies which accompany Remedios la Bella everywhere she goes, but both signal significance.

As the novel opens, Colonel Aureliano Buendía recalls the beginning of the narrative: "Many years later, as he faced the firing squad, Colonel Aureliano Buendía was to remember that distant afternoon when his father took him to discover ice." In its opening sentence, then, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* locates itself in two distinct places in time, specifically the moment just preceding Aureliano's immanent death and the earliest days of Macondo, when "the world was so recent that many things lacked names, and in order to indicate them it was necessary to point" (11). The narrative from its onset presents time not as a linear sequence but as having an overlapping nature, in that events that take place

years apart from each other occur at the same moment in the narrative. Hutcheon points to the title of a conference on postmodern architecture, "The Presence of the Past," as a concept taking a "governing role" in postmodern arts in general (4). From its first sentence, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* exhibits this quality, as the distant past, the "discovery" of ice, exists coequally with another time, the day Aureliano faces the firing squad. It is in part a necessary step, for if the text opens in a world where even the names of concrete things have not yet formed, let alone those for actions or sensations, narrative would become impossible, since texts do not have recourse to gesture or, particularly in imaginary narrative, to point at anything "real."³ This inclusion of two times in a single narrative, however, also begins to set up the problematic relationship of knowledge and event throughout the novel.

The dilemma for western readers becomes knowledge, specifically regarding the progression of events through this imaginary narrative, for the novel draws the reader into a complicit understanding that knowing is not necessarily the same as historical memory. Knowledge becomes significant both in its relation to scaled time, as an event need not be in the past to be known, and in the extent to which various characters may interpret or predict what goes on in their mysterious and numinous environment. The novel follows the model Hutcheon sets up as the crux of the paradoxical nature

of postmodern historical narrative: "It reinstalls historical contexts as significant and even determining, but in doing so, it problematizes the entire notion of historical knowledge" (Hutcheon 89). *One Hundred Years of Solitude* ensconces context in a multi-layered way, depicting several distinct time-frames in one narrative moment. Mention of the Colonel's eventual execution presupposes knowledge of an event before readers even encounter the character who will one day have his back to the firing squad wall. The text does not introduce Aureliano again until the end of the first chapter, some twenty-five pages later, so even before he takes on any real form, any substance as a character, readers know something crucial of his life. Indeed, that knowledge becomes especially significant in reading through the narrative when it concerns Aureliano, for the text refers again and again to the moment when his death is all but consummated. Readers, constantly reminded that the Colonel will one day face the firing squad cannot help but anticipate that event looming in the narrative.

Even as a boy, "he had the same languor and the same clairvoyant look that he would have years later as he faced the firing squad. But he still had not sensed the premonition of his fate... He seemed to be taking refuge in some other time..." (56). The essential aspect of Aureliano lies not in what he is or has been at any given moment in the text, but becomes organized around one particular moment in

his life. Readers must maintain a double-edged consciousness in dealing with the narrative, as we must follow both events of other times in the narrative, even as we move through its present in reading the text. This passage, moreover, becomes intricate with regard to the rest of the text as it forecasts Aureliano's eventual ability to foresee his own death and thereby affects another level of the novel's interrogation of knowledge. Essentially, readers' knowledge of both the coming execution and of Aureliano's own knowledge of his (potential) death differs from his prescience only in the moment at which the apprehension reveals itself. We know, in other words, that he *will* be able to sense his approaching fate even before he does so. In this regard, the narrative sets up a linear progression of knowledge, since the reader knows something of Aureliano's life before he does, but defuses that linear sense as the firing squad does not actually kill Aureliano. The fact stated in the opening sentence of the narrative takes on historical significance, but the narrative deflates that sense in confounding our anticipation of its outcome.

Other significant events in his personal history, like his wedding day, become tied to the moment years later when he would face that firing squad:

Aureliano, dressed in black, wearing the same patent leather boots with metal fasteners that he would have on only a few years later as he faced the firing squad,

had an intense paleness and a lump in his throat when he met the bride at the door of the house and led her to the altar. (86)

Even at the moment when he should celebrate the happiest day of his life, readers cannot escape the fact of the Colonel's coming execution. The firing squad takes on an increasingly greater level of importance as our knowledge of the event becomes reinforced with every mention.

Just as his execution iterates through the text, not being tied to the moment of its occurrence, so the Colonel becomes the only character who moves out from Macondo to affect the world at large. In one fell swoop, the text pre-capitulates the broad scope of his experiences as a leader of men. The passage becomes a kind of chronicle of events foretold, a history, of sorts, before the fact:

Colonel Aureliano Buendía organized thirty-two armed uprisings and lost them all. He had seventeen male children by seventeen different women and they were exterminated one after the other on a single night before the oldest had reached the age of thirty-five. He survived fourteen attempts on his life, seventy-three ambushes, and a firing squad. He lived through a dose of strychnine in his coffee that was enough to kill a horse.... He rose to be Commander in Chief of the revolutionary forces, with jurisdiction and command from one border to the other, and the man most feared

by the government.... He declined the lifetime pension offered him after the war and until old age he made his living from the little gold fishes that he manufactured in his workshop in Macondo.... He shot himself in the chest and the bullet came out through his back without damaging any vital organ. (104)

This paragraph makes the point clear that though we may know a general course of events in advance, we can have no knowledge of what actually happens without more detailed narrative. The mere fact that Aureliano will face a firing squad and escape death only a few months after setting out on his first revolutionary expedition does not relate any of the interesting particulars. There are "whys" and "hows" left unaccounted for, along with related phenomena not part of a linear history that supposes a causal relationship.

When the narrative finally moves to the eve of the announced date of his execution, Aureliano tells his mother, "This morning, when they brought me in, I had the impression that I had been through all that before" (122). Though he may have known about the shape of events to come, sitting in his cell, he is nevertheless puzzled by the lack of any clear premonition of his death:

Since the beginning of adolescence, when he had begun to be aware of his premonitions, he thought that death would be announced with a definite, unequivocal,

irrevocable signal, but there were only a few hours left before he would die, and the signal had not come.... His efforts to systematize his premonitions were useless. They would come suddenly in a wave of supernatural lucidity, like an absolute and momentous conviction, but they could not be grasped. On occasion, they were so natural that he only identified them after they had been fulfilled. (123-4)

When the event so long pre-figured in the text finally arrives, neither the reader nor Aureliano knows what will happen. He had become such a mythic character by that time that his executioners were afraid to carry out the order of execution for fear of repercussion through either human or super-natural agency. All the foreknowledge of the event, finally, comes to nothing, as the actual event takes an unexpected turn, resulting not in Aureliano's death but in his fortunate escape. Following Hutcheon's model, the narrative foregrounds historical knowledge before undercutting it. In what she calls "the paradox of the postmodern," the narrative carefully "installs" knowledge of this event gained anterior to the event itself, then "[confronts] both the grounding process and those grounds themselves" and leaves the conflict unresolved (Hutcheon 92). We can deny neither the significance of premonition in its constant reiteration nor the twist the narrative takes in exploiting our expectations.

Hutcheon goes on to explore the ramifications of the paradoxical nature of historiographic metafiction with regard to Hayden White's suggestion that "narrative is a meta-code, a human universal on the basis of which transcultural messages about the nature of a shared reality can be transmitted" (White 1). She points out that both historiographic and imaginary narrative "are not constraints, but enabling conditions of the possibility of sense-making" (Hutcheon 121). Both historiographic "knowledge" and narrative maintain their respective statuses as signifying systems, but in postmodern fiction, they sit in non-dialectical conflict with each other. Historiographic metafiction privileges neither and therefore avoids the possibility of a hierarchy. The narrative of Colonel Aureliano Buendía's life, both in its broad generalizations and in the details surrounding the moment of his "execution," works perfectly as an example of this model for the postmodern novel. The details given in the close narrative undercut historical information, the general facts, which have been privileged throughout the early narrative about Aureliano's life. Readers cannot deny the historical fact that the Colonel faces the firing squad, but the specifics given only at the moment when he stands against the wall reveal the shortcomings of historical knowledge considered as "truth."⁶

In dealing with Aureliano, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*

breaks down a linear notion of time. Knowledge does not rely on the anteriority of an event for it to be known. Although neither the reader nor Aureliano, indeed anyone, can be said to "remember" the future, the narrative suggests that knowledge can come from times other than the past, since those times overlap and occur at the same point in the narrative. Knowledge that relies on a historical memory thus falls further into question. The novel does not rely on a central figure, a protagonist, and the colonel is not the only character who exemplifies the narrative's internal conflict with history.

The character who acts as a mother and matriarch to every member of the Buendía family, biological or adopted also engages in the struggle. Through Úrsula Buendía, the narrative asserts the value of personal and family memory as an alternative to historical thought. Even so, Úrsula is a tricky figure to engage, because she presents so many different forms of knowledge in relating the past to present or even future time.

As one of the original inhabitants of Macondo, she came to settle the place with her husband, the original José Arcadio, with whom she was "joined till death by a bond more solid than (sic) love: a common prick of conscience. They were cousins" (28). The blood relationship lies at the center of both her almost obsessive fears about her family and her folk-knowledge. When Úrsula's Aunt and José

Arcadio's Uncle married, they produced a son

who went through life wearing loose, baggy trousers and who bled to death after having lived forty-two years in the purest state of virginity, for he had been born and had grown up with a cartilaginous tail in the shape of a corkscrew.... A pig's tail that was never allowed to be seen by any woman.... (28)

Úrsula's knowledge of those events, her memory of the consequences of incest, informs the control she asserts over the Buendía family. Using it as an example and constant reminder of what might happen if any her children or grandchildren consummate incestuous desire, she relies on that knowledge as a part of her authority. Moreover, she extends the significance of the pig's tail making it the consequences of any transgression, "real" or perceived, relating all personal flaws to that pig's tail. When, for example, her daughter Amaranta and Arcadio, her bastard grandson whom she has adopted, refuse to speak Spanish, the *lingua franca* of the household, in favor of native people's Guajiro, she "[laments] her misfortunes, convinced that the wild behavior of her children was something as fearful as a pig's tail" (46). When her son, Colonel Aureliano, must kill his best friend and comrade, Gerineldo Márquez, she tells him, "It's the same as if you'd been born with the tail of a pig" (163). And when, finally, Remedios la Bella drives her cousins, the seventeen sons of Aureliano, to the verge of

insanity with their desire for her innocent and unbearable sensuality, Úrsula warns her that, "With any of them, your children will come out with the tail of a pig" (217).⁷

Her pleas, based as they are in this remarkable piece of information, go for the most part unheard since the Buendías seem bound to their wild natures as they move inexorably through their evolution as a family. Yet, through her continued prophesy, Úrsula does exercise control. As she reminds her children again and again that the penalty for their incestuous behavior is nothing less than catastrophe, all their sexual relationships with each other never result in children. Despite the various couplings among adopted and natural children who consummate marriages and all the unbearable attraction among kin, no children result, and thus no chance of pigs' tails occurs until after Úrsula is dead and gone. The real significance of her knowledge, even if that lore is ignored or slightly parodied throughout the novel, becomes apparent after her death. When the final Aureliano and Amaranta Úrsula are left as the last Buendías and the first to inhabit the house without Úrsula's direct control, they "remained floating in an empty universe where the everyday and eternal reality was love" (374). Without her direct influence, the order she perceives and enforces by maintaining a strict taboo against marriages between relatives disappears. Their world becomes devoid of meaning,

"empty," as the structure Úrsula maintained breaks down.

Their love results in a child, who, despite Amaranta Úrsula's belief that he would be "predisposed to begin the race again from the beginning and cleanse it of its pernicious vices and solitary calling, for he was the only one born in a century who had been engendered with love," had "something more than other men.... It was the tail of a pig" (378-9). The final child of the Buendía family causes his mother's death as she hemorrhages uncontrollably, and he is left with no one to care for him because Aureliano disappears back into Melquiades' text of the family history. Ants bear the child away, and Aureliano recognizes the end of the line both literally and figuratively as he reads everything to the very end, when text and narrative coincide with the end of the novel.

In her own way, then, Úrsula exercises control over the family, recognizing that the inescapable conclusion to the family's history will arrive with the second coming of a child with a pig's tail. Her desire to stay alive until the point when they could calculate her life as having been somewhere between 115 and 122 years keeps the family going. With her unwavering efforts to restrain the family from committing the final act that ends the line, and her implicit knowledge that "races condemned to one hundred years of solitude did not have a second opportunity on earth," she drives the family to continue (383). The world of the

narrative and the history of the Buendías' cannot continue without her unceasing exercise of authority under the auspices of her knowledge, seemingly absurd and parodic, that the fate of the family rests in the birth of a child with the tail of a pig. With her end, the novel winds inexorably to a stop. Her long memory, which kept alive the realization that to consummate incestuous love would finish the family once and for all, gone, the knowledge and authority that kept urges in check disappears and the Buendías can meet their collective fate.

Parodied though it may be, her knowledge demonstrates another aspect of the postmodern text as Hutcheon delineates it:

Parodic echoing of the past... can still be deferential. It is in this way that postmodern parody marks its paradoxical doubleness of both continuity and change, both authority and transgression.

Postmodernist parody... uses its historical memory, its aesthetic introversion, to signal that this kind of self-reflexive discourse is always inextricably bound to social discourse. (35)

Úrsula uses, in other words, her memory to install a family past as part of her authority over the Buendías. Her fear of pig's tails, absurd both in its repetition and our knowledge that people simply are not born with them, nonetheless acknowledges the past. When the final Buendía is born and

dies shortly thereafter with one, the narrative bows to her memory and fulfills her prophesy, maintaining a continuity that comes out of the past and into the narrative's present.

Úrsula has more than simple recourse to folk history in her knowledge of the way time and history work. To be specific, she does not have to go outside the narrative into some shadowy past as she constructs meaning which parallels the narrative's development toward its final end. Even without Aureliano's somewhat unreliable premonitions, she has the ability to see into the nature of passing time that grows over the years as she lives through the lives of her children and the generations which follow. Over the course of the narrative, she deduces its eventual outcome. Her power over her family is such that even the great Colonel Aureliano "more than once... felt her thoughts interfering with his" (167). As she deduces the nature of time and history in the novel, others recognize her authority.

Aureliano Segundo, her great-grandson, acknowledges her strength in asking her why Melquiades and his tribe do not return with their fabulous inventions. Úrsula answers quite simply, "What's happening... is that the world is slowly coming to an end and those things don't come here any more" (176). In other words, she recognizes the fact somehow that even as everything around seems to move in wild, fecund cycles of endless José Arcadios and Aurelianos, it moves toward its conclusion. By the time she is a blind old woman

moving toward death, she says, "'The years nowadays don't pass the way the old ones used to used to'... feeling that everyday reality was slipping through her hands" (230). Slowly but surely, she comes to realize that she is the only witness to the non-linear, cyclical nature of time. She begins to see the world as a progression of repetitions not moving *ad infinitum*, but toward a very definite close.

When, at the very end of her life after the great rain, she repeats verbatim a conversation she had with Aureliano as he sat waiting to be executed, the knowledge that time in the narrative is moving very quickly toward its conclusion surprises and horrifies her:

'What did you expect?' [José Arcadio Segundo] murmured, 'Time passes.'

'That's how it goes,' Úrsula said, 'but not so much.'

When she said it she realized that she was giving the same reply that Colonel Aureliano Buendía had given in his death cell, and once again she shuddered with the evidence that time was not passing as she had just admitted, but that it was turning in a circle. (310)

Even as she comes to the realization that the family winds its way toward a close, and feels the horror of her inability to stop that progression, so too, does she submit to time as she approaches death.

In her final days, Úrsula lives in the past as much as in

the present and begins to manifest that change physically:

She finally mixed up the past with the present in such a way that in the two or three waves of lucidity that she had before she died, no one knew for certain whether she was speaking about what she felt or what she remembered. Little by little she was shrinking, turning into a fetus, becoming mummified in life to the point that in her last months she was a cherry raisin lost inside her nightgown.... She looked like a newborn old woman. (315)

Moving beyond the simple passage of time, experiencing a broader spectrum of history than most ever see, Úrsula has an insight into things both mundane and significant. Even as she exists within the narrative, she perceives as clearly as readers, who must remain physically outside that world, how narrative time operates as she recognizes its movement toward an eventual close. As a major player in the narrative, her character exhibits the kind of self-conscious play that takes place within postmodern novels. With her recognition that all narratives come to a close and consequently that her family's history, being nothing more than narrative, must end, the novel works on a metafictional level.⁸

After breaking down the notion of linear time through Aureliano and asserting the importance of memory in constructing history, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* opens

historical knowledge, in the sense not of historical fact, of the specifics of an event, but of a broader insight into the process of history, up to narrative scrutiny. When Úrsula senses the closed nature of her world and reflects the progression of the narrative in which she exists, she opens it to interpretation on the level of the meta-narrative. Fredric Jameson in *The Political Unconscious* describes a model of interpretation especially apt for postmodern novels:

It is in detecting the traces of that uninterrupted narrative, in restoring to the surface of the text the repressed and buried reality of this fundamental history, that the doctrine of a political unconscious finds its function and its necessity. (20)

Úrsula brings traces of history to the surface. It remains inaccessible, as Jameson points out it must, in that it can never be directly represented or described. A narrative, however, that allows for several distinct times to exist in one moment, generates a genuine sense of the diachronic.

Hutcheon addresses the way in which historiographic metafiction works theoretically, as it does with Úrsula's realization of the way in which this narrative sets the limits of history, when she points out that:

Historical accounts and literary interpretations are equally determined by underlying theoretical assumptions. And in postmodern fiction too, theory interpenetrates with narrative and diachrony is

reinserted into synchrony, though not in any simplistic way: the problematic concept of historical knowledge and the semiotic notion of language as a social contract are reinscribed in the metafictionally self-conscious and self-regulating signifying system of literature. (99)

In this case, Úrsula, a part of an imaginary, and therefore purely narrative, history comes closer than readers can to History itself. The narrative realizes Jameson's theory that:

...history is *not* a text, not a narrative, master or otherwise, but ..., as an absent cause, it is inaccessible to us except in textual form, and... our approach to it and to the Real itself necessarily passes through its prior textualization, its narrativization in the political unconscious. (35)

In *Úrsula One Hundred Years of Solitude* presents historical knowledge, knowledge of the inaccessible, for what it is: part of an imaginary construct, a narrativized illusion. Her shudder at the recognition that the narrative, that her history, must come to a conclusion, recognizes both the continuous progression of history, its diachronic nature, and the form it must take in an individual narrative. There is no resolution, no totalizing epiphany, here, but an identification of and terror at the paradoxical nature of the relation of historical knowledge to the narrative in which that knowledge is contained and which forces its closure.

In its only engagement with "real" history, *One Hundred Years of Solitude* recasts a banana strike as having history contrary to what society recalls in its consensus.⁹ The final third of the novel reveals quite obviously the kind of distortion of history that takes place in textualization. When Macondo first encounters the colonial mind of a major fruit corporation, the colonizers change the face of everything, starting with the local topography: "they changed the patterns of the rains, accelerated the cycle of the harvest, and moved the river from where it had always been and put it with its white stones and icy currents on the other side of the town, behind the cemetery" (214). But for the most part, the company goes about its business leaving the Buendías almost unaffected in their solitary ways.

When José Arcadio Segundo, already somewhat alienated from his home though inextricably tied to his family's history, witnesses the outcome of the great strike of local workers, the event works its way into the family consciousness, and the facts conflict with official "truth." After the moment of violence when fourteen machine guns open up on a large crowd of innocent protesters, the wounded and dazed José Arcadio Segundo wakes in a boxcar and begins to know the immensity of what has occurred:

He realized that he was riding on an endless and silent train and that his head was caked with dry blood and that all his bones ached.... Prepared to sleep for

many hours safe from the terror and the horror, he made himself comfortable on the side that pained him less, and only then did he discover that he was lying against dead people.... Several hours must have passed since the massacre because the corpses had the same temperature as a plaster in autumn and the same consistency of petrified foam that it had, and those who had put them in the car had had time to pile them up in the same way in which they transported bunches of bananas. (284)

As eyewitness and sole survivor to the slaughter and its verifiable results, only José Arcadio Segundo remembers what happened. In asking around town, everybody denies that anything out of the ordinary occurred. Only one man, the readers, and a small child, who "would remember the scene years later" are privy to the facts about the event (284).

Even José Arcadio Segundo's twin brother, Aureliano Segundo, does not believe the truth since:

The night before he had read an extraordinary proclamation to the nation which said that the workers had left the station [where the massacre took place] and had returned home in peaceful groups. The proclamation also stated that the union leaders, with great patriotic spirit, had reduced their demands to two points: a reform of medical services and the building of latrines in the living quarters.... The

official version, repeated a thousand times and mangled out all over the country by every means of communication the government found at hand was finally accepted: there were no dead, the satisfied workers had gone back to their families, and the banana company was suspending all activity until the rain stopped. (286-7)

The official version obscures any trace of the event and replaces it with a convenient lie. In the immediate wake of things, official representations within the narrative stifle history in favor of an expedient lie. The only person who knows what really happened, goes into a reclusive exile in darkened room, but that is enough. José Arcadio Segundo's survival alone safeguards the "reality" of what happened. Like Úrsula's impassioned perpetuation of her knowledge of a family-specific history, the only carrier of this knowledge preserves it for people who follow. In setting up the official version of the banana strike in direct conflict with what "really" happens, the text exemplifies Jameson's notions of a political unconscious, an ideological underpinning, that generates narrative. When the government makes its proclamation, it creates its own narrative about the event. Clearly serving to maintain the status quo, that pronouncement reveals the way in which capital, or any ideology, seeks to establish then preserve its sovereignty. In this case, the government, working with its corporate

partners, creates an account of the strike which defuses any possibility of a reaction to the slaughter and thus keeps up the illusion of a beneficial order.

Only José Arcadio Segundo knows what really happened and so disappears into hiding in an unused room of the house where there are seventy-two unused chamber pots. When the government comes looking for him to eradicate the last vestige of knowledge of the event, they overlook his presence in the room, even though they search it and he sits out in the open. Working within its own logic, the text preserves the "real" version the strike and its catastrophic results. Only readers, who see the entire spectrum of the event's representations, and José Arcadio, who disappears into hiding, experience either the event itself or its direct narration. The narrative once again foregrounds individual memory as the only means we have to encounter history.

A few years later, when the last of the Aurelianos who will grow to manhood encounters him, José Arcadio Segundo imparts not only the truth about the strike, but also the ability to begin deciphering Melquiades' prophetic parchments:

Actually, in spite of the fact that everyone considered him mad, José Arcadio Segundo was at the time the most lucid inhabitant of the house. He taught little Aureliano how to read and write, initiated him into the study of the parchments, and he inculcated him

with such a personal interpretation of what the banana company had meant to Macondo that many years later, when Aureliano became part of the world, one would have thought that he was telling a hallucinated version because it was radically opposed to the false one that historians had consecrated in the schoolbooks. (321-2)

Long after José Arcadio Segundo dies with his final admonishment to Aureliano to remember what happened, that child goes on to proclaim his knowledge of the old gypsy's parchments that, "Everything is known" as he reads the texts which will close the narrative around him in his final solitude as the Buendías "would be wiped out by the wind and exiled from the memory of men" (352, 383). The simple fact that someone can carry history only as part of individual memory remains. Stripped of ideology, particularly of the capitalist underpinnings which bolstered first the banana company's then the government's barefaced displacement of the truth, only an innocent child raised in solitude and left alone to read musty parchments remembers what happened.

Once again, it is the individual who constructs or retains meaning and history, not some vast cultural consciousness or "factual" text. The narrative undercuts its own authority to distribute meaning in undercutting texts in general to some extent. But, in its textualization of the event, it fulfills White and Jameson's assertions that the only access we have to history is through narrativization. Within the narrative,

the value of historical knowledge comes into question, for the proclamation and schoolbooks which treat the banana strike are clearly false while the actual event remains shut up inside the memory of three characters or outside the text in readers.

In its final form in the novel, historical knowledge is subject to the same scrutiny it has undergone throughout the novel. Whether knowledge relates to the past or the future, whether it is a matter for family memory or the broader history of the region, whether, finally, it is deduced over time, intuited in epiphanic moments, or directly experienced, history can only be known within the narrative. Narrative can relate specifics of an event as it occurs, but, being linear in its ordered progression from first to last page, it distorts the facts of an event. Knowledge, then, becomes not a matter of naming or events, but of engaging in narrative, in discourse. Just as the characters in the novel can only encounter truth over the course of their cumulative experience, so too a reader can only arrive at some version of the "truth" through an open engagement with narrative.

Hutcheon asserts that historiographical metafiction reveals the discursive nature of "truth" in its inscription of fact in narrative, and therefore problematizes historical knowledge in its reliance on narrative. Readers, then, must engage the text not to come to a realization of a false totality, but to keep their minds active in interpreting the

text. We must keep our own memories and interpretive faculties intact if the essential, non-dialectical relationship between history and fiction in the postmodern novel, and *One Hundred Years of Solitude* in particular, is to remain open-ended. To fall into a false sense of totality, to succumb to nostalgia for what has always been inaccessible, loses sight of the interrogation of history historiographic metafiction posits as one of its main components.

Notes

1. In her one reference to a specific example in the text, Hutcheon refers to the plague of insomnia and later memory as "a lesson in the dangers of forgetting the personal and public past" in the course of a discussion of Gunther Grass' historiographic metafiction (197).

2. In her essay, "Historical Subversion and Violence of Representation in García Márquez and *Ouologuem*," Edna Aitzenberg acknowledges Hutcheon's work when she states that *One Hundred Years of Solitude* has "many characteristics befitting the historiographical-metafictional bent of contemporary Western novels" but criticizes it sharply for displaying a western bias (1236). Aitzenberg's assertion that postcolonial literature cannot think historically because "there is simply no past of which to speak" and that this novel presents a "seamless sweep" of history based in western models of history which reveals a "broken history" of violence bases its claim in the novel's tie to Latin American history, or the lack thereof (1236, 1239). The two arguments, however, are not necessarily in direct conflict, since the novel has been taken up enthusiastically by the American academy (of whom, incidentally, Márquez has said: "Critics in the United States best understand my works," and has become a practical source guiding theoretical inquiry into this model for postmodern fiction in general (Marquez

[interview] 67). Hutcheon's and my approach to the novel does not think in terms of history itself so much as historical knowledge, i.e. how we "know" history.

3. For convenience's sake, I will cite all references from *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by page number only.

4. In his essay "*Cien Años de Soledad: The Novel as Myth and Archive*," Roberto González Echevarría describes this kind of event in the novel as having a "mythic character (369). He places this mythic sense in direct conflict with history (especially as archive) in what he calls "an unresolved mixture that both beckons and bewilders the reader" (370).

His argument, then, senses the tension between historiographical and imaginative aspects of literature. Unfortunately, Echevarría goes on to privilege this mythic sense and conclude with the assertion that "our desire for meaning can only be satisfied by myth" (380).

5. I'd like to address a pair of interesting, related points here: 1) In Michel Foucault's *The Order of Things*, he discusses the evolution of language, knowledge, and the world from the classical age (16th c.) through the present as being problematic, exploring how the three elements relate to each other over the past 400 years in the same way that Marquez raises the question subtly here. See: *The Order of Things*, xx, 35-6, 40-41, 55-57, 86-88, 237. And 2) Wittgenstein's discussion of the problems in deixis raised in pointing and naming demonstrates the dilemma that the early inhabitants of

Macondo face in their pre-linguistic world. See:

Philosophical Investigations, ¶ 669-671.

6. Foucault addressed the issue of the relation of truth to knowledge in *The Order of Things* when he makes the assertion that "What civilizations and peoples leave us as the monuments of their thought is not so much... their discourse as the element that made it possible, the discursivity of their language" (87). Hayden White sums up the general tenor of this argument in his *The Content of the Form*, writing, "... truth and error were always a function of the modality of discourse prevailing in centers of social power at different periods" (113). In evading our expectation of the event when it occurs, this narrative reveals its own discursivity and exposes the privilege it granted the fact that Aureliano would face the firing squad at the expense of other important details.

7. Remedios has a beauty that drives men to their deaths while they pursue her in her "magnificent adolescence" (217), in which she refuses any clothes but a simple shift which gives her the comfort of being nude, her preferred dress-- so that to see her was "an eternal instant" (187).

8. The argument that Úrsula's character comes to have a metafictional aspect argues directly with Iddo Landau who, in his "Metafiction as a Rhetorical Device in Hegel's History of Absolute Spirit and Gabriel García Márquez' *One Hundred Years of Solitude*," claims that the metafictional stage of the

novel comes only at the end as Aureliano reads Melquiades' parchments in the very last stage of the novel. In fact, I would argue that metafiction is woven subtly throughout, if only in the fact that several characters attempt to decypher those parchments, and that it is an essential aspect of the narrative model explored here, not simply a "rhetorical device" used, as Landau puts it, for "aesthetic effect" in creating the "effect of truthfulness" (406, 407). Landau, furthermore, feels that Hegel used metafiction "more fully" in coming to a final synthesis, a "complete similarity" of representation and represented, which Márquez's novel resists (408). I would argue that this text uses it as "fully" as Hegel's in combatting the false totality of a final synthesis.

9. This "reality" has become incidental, finally, since, as Marquez points out in an interview, "Nobody has studied events around the real banana strike- and now when they talk about it in the newspapers, even once in the congress, they speak about the 3000 who died! And I wonder if with time it will become true that 3000 were killed. That is why in *The Autumn of the Patriarch*, there is a moment when the patriarch says, 'It doesn't matter if it is true now; it will be with time'" (Marquez [interview] 76). For the purposes of this discussion, then, the significance lies not in a textual correlation with real events so much as a truth internal to the narrative itself, as a function of discourse.

III. "Preserving Fragments": Narrative and History in Milorad Pavic's *Dictionary of the Khazars*

In his essay "The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality," Hayden White points out that though narrative may be a "meta-code, a human universal on the basis of which transcultural messages about the nature of a shared reality can be transmitted," the manifestations of our need to narrativize, narratives themselves, are "culture specific, not universal at all" (White 1, 10). He also stresses that "... narrative in general, from the folktale to the novel, from the annals to the fully realized 'history,' has to do with the topics of law, legality, legitimacy, or, more generally, authority" (White 13). Narrative reinforces the cultural dominant, the ultimate authority from which they are produced:

If every fully realized story, however we define that familiar but conceptually elusive entity, is a kind of allegory, points to a moral, or endows events, whether real or imaginary, with a significance that they do not possess as a mere sequence, then it seems possible to conclude that every historical narrative has as its latent or manifest purpose the desire to moralize the events of which it treats.... And this suggests that

narrativity, certainly in factual storytelling and probably in fictional storytelling as well, is intimately related to, if not a function of, the impulse to moralize reality, that is, to identify it with the social system that is the source of any morality that we can imagine (White 14).

In western societies, the moral impulse has tended toward linearity, as if a higher order determines a chronological sequence of events. White explores some of the older forms of this ordering of things through the annal and the chronicle as he works toward describing modern historical narrative. The annal and the chronical, the latter being more fleshed out, a finished narrative, share sequence as their infrastructure:

The link of the chronicle with the annals is perceived in the perseverance of the chronology as the organizing principle of the discourse, and this is what makes the the chronicle something less than a fully realized 'history' (White 16).

He goes on to point out that the authority historical narratives claim derives from "reality itself," but that they get caught in the bind of "the imposition upon [reality's] processes of the formal coherency that only stories possess" (White, 16). Historical accounts fix a meaning to history through the evolution of narrative, taking events as raw material and transforming them into meaningful discourse.

Indeed, as White points out, modern historians judge older forms like the annal and the chronicle in terms of the development of their narrative. Even when the discipline of history assumed the authority of an objective school of thought, of historiography, it "celebrated" the "narrativity of the historical discourse as one of the signs of its maturation as a fully 'objective' discipline" (White 24). Historical studies' reliance on an ordering principle after the fact in the creation of narrative belies a paradoxical fallacy: they seek to determine the lessons events can teach, even as they impose meaning on those events through their inclusion in a narrative. The value placed on narrative in historical studies "arises out of a desire to have real events display the coherence, integrity, fullness, and closure of an image of life that is and can only be imaginary" (White 24).

The postmodern novel confronts this type of blind validation of false objectivity regarding history as it reconsiders both narrative and history. One of the prime examples of this historiographic metafiction, Milorad Pavic's novel *Dictionary of the Khazars*, encounters historical events and people in the creation of three intertwined texts about the Khazar people and the historians who constructed its history.¹ Unlike traditional history based in chronology, *Dictionary of the Khazars* tells of the Khazar people's conversion and disappearance and the succession of people who

have studied those events through a variety of entries based not on a linear sequence of events, but on their alphabetical inclusion into three separate dictionaries: one Christian, one Moslem, and one Hebrew. As a collection of entries, or micro-narratives, relating to a broad topic, the novel avoids becoming a seamless, closed narrative but retains coherency in addressing issues linked by their connection to "the Khazar question" (Pavic title page).² Preliminary notes describe the text:

In the 17th-century original all the words were arranged differently and, in changing from one language to another, the same name would appear in different places in each of the three dictionaries... because letters do not follow the same sequence in every alphabet.... Indeed, the same principle would apply to each new translation into any other language, because the material for this dictionary on the Khazars would inevitably have to be grouped differently in each new language and new alphabet, so that entries would always appear somewhere else and the names would acquire an ever-changing hierarchy (10-11).

The notes go on to assert explicitly, "No chronology will be observed here, nor is one necessary" (13).

The novel does more than simply call linear time needless; it explains its logic. In the first appendix, "Father

Theocitist Nikolsky as Compiler of *The Khazar Dictionary*," the novel offers some observations from the man who takes the various fragments from the battlefield where seventeenth century historians' Samuel Cohen, Avram Brankovich, and Yusuf Masudi die to be published by the Polish Jew, Joannes Daubmannus. Nikolsky, a Polish monk employed as Masudi's partner to transcribe Brankovich's research, argues against chronology as a necessary component in historical narrative:

...nothing happens in the flow of time... the world does not change through the years but inside itself and through space simultaneously-- it changes in countless forms, shuffling them like cards and assigning the past of some as lessons to the future or present of others.... One should not consider all those nights around us as one night... as being one in the same night, for they are not: they are thousands upon hundreds of thousands of nights, which, instead of travelling through time one after another, like birds, calendars, or clocks, evolve simultaneously.... For the Papists in Rome and here, today is Assumption Day, but for Christians of the Eastern rite... it is the Day of the Translation of the Relics of the Archdeacon St. Steven the Beardless; for some this year of 1688 will end fifteen days earlier; for the Jews in the

ghettos it is already the year 5447, while for the Arabs it is only the year 905 (313).

Using such examples, Nikolsky offers a clear example of how the different faiths, even individual sects within Christianity, shift the perception of time to fit their ideologies. Though nights themselves exist concurrently, belief informs our naming them. Thus, religious ideology constitutes not the nights, for they are part of autonomous eternity, but the perception of difference between them. For *Dictionary of the Khazars*, and Father Nikolsky as one of its many contributors, diachronic and synchronic distinctions become utterly insignificant, for to think of time at all is to ignore the simultaneity that he asserts and the novel upholds in compiling entries based on an arbitrary order.

As the conclusion to his musings on the nature of time, Nikolsky says:

Time belongs to Satan: he carries it like a skein in the pocket of the devil, unravels it when his mysterious economies so dictate, and it should be wrested away from him. For, if one can ask and receive eternity only from God, then we can take the opposite of eternity-- time-- only from Satan (315).

The implied metaphor here links any concept of temporal continuum with evil. History constructed as a narrative progression allies one with Satan by denying God's gift of

eternity. Thus, linear narratives, especially traditional histories, fall into hell's logic, its discourse, as they assert sequence and carefully select and position events in their creation of a closed whole.

Dictionary of the Khazars maintains this perception of time as the devil's purview since three characters from hell are the only diachronic elements in the text. Nikon Sevast, the Christian devil, Yabir Ibn Akshany, the Islamic, and Ephrosinia Lukarevich, the Hebrew, are the only characters who act in several different times. Although almost every entry in the three dictionaries makes reference to and inscribes the presence of historical figures like the Kaghan of the Khazars, their Princess Ateh, or the original participants in the polemic, these three devils alone appear throughout the text. All three in their seventeenth-century manifestations guide the historians, Masudi, Brankovich, and Cohen, to attempt their compilations of a true narrative on the Khazar question.

Sevast, a left-handed painter at Nikolsky's monastery, has no division between his nostrils and "pisses with his tail, like all satans," becomes Father Nikolsky's partner as one of Brankovich's scribes (50). When Masudi, who is also a part of Brankovich's entourage at the time of his death, exposes Sevast, he replies honestly, "I do not deny that I am Satan.... but this does not give a Masudi or other representatives of the Moslem world the right to judge me,"

thereby claiming privileges from within one ideological framework and demonstrating that standards exist only within a given discourse (50).

Through encounters in various entries, Akshany becomes recognizable to readers by the two-pronged fork he prefers to use while eating and the lute made of a white turtle's shell (128). As a great lute player, who uses his tail as an eleventh finger and thus plays passages impossible for humans, Akshany gains Masudi's respect, since Masudi began life as a great lute player and admires Akshany's skill on the instrument. The devil convinces Masudi to give up his music and become a dream hunter to track down the other two seventeenth-century historians.

Finally, Lukarevich, who "had two thumbs on each hand, and always wore gloves, even at meals," becomes Cohen's lover when he lives in Dubrovnik (268). She tells him: "what flows out of [her] is time.... [she is] the devil; [her] name is 'sleep.' [she comes] from the Hebrew hell, from Gehenna" and thus reveals not only her identity, but also time's source in hell (219). She has Cohen banished from Dubrovnik and sets him on a collision course with his Christian and Moslem counterparts.

Compelling the three historians toward each other, the devils force the misguided attempt at an objective history of the Khazars. In working toward an impossible goal, the devils condemn Brankovich, Cohen, and Masudi to death, as

they can never realize their collective dream of an objectively "true" history. Like the ideologies to which they are attached, Akshany, Lukarevich, and Sevast perform the double-edged task of inspiring and damning mortals.

When the entries concern the twentieth century, as each dictionary describes its representatives to an academic conference in Istanbul, the devils reappear and cause the mysterious deaths of Doctors Suk and Muaiwa, the Christian and Islamic scholars, and frame Doctor Schultz, the Jewish scholar. Schultz describes the Van der Spaak family, a wealthy family staying at the same hotel as conference members:

Mr. Spaak.... plays sublimely on an instrument made out of white tortoiseshell, and his wife's preoccupation is painting. She paints with her left hand, and very well, too.... The boy is only just four.... I was horrified to see that he has a deformity: he has two thumbs on each hand" (291).

In the description, the physical markers of the devils emerge, and when Schultz is tried for murder, they clearly play a role in Virginia Ateh's testimony.³ Her damning statement places Schultz at the scene of at least one of the murders.

The murders that occur when the "family" is around destroy any chance for the three professors from different faiths to come together and share the work they have done in

constructing a history of the Khazars. Through their ability to work diachronically, the devils reinforce the ideological function of historical narrative keeping the religions at odds with one another. They deliberately prohibit the creation of a new version of Khazar history that might have broken down ideological barriers as Muaiwa, Suk, and Schultz lose the opportunity to work together.

Just as the novel connects historical narrative with ideologies safeguarded by devils, it revels in individual interpretation as the only alternative perception of history. By refusing to impose order and totality, *Dictionary of the Khazars* enhances each readers' role in the process of constructing meaning:

Hence, each reader will put together the book for himself, as in a game of dominoes or cards, and, as with a mirror, he will get out of this dictionary as much as he puts into it, for, as is written on one of the pages of this lexicon, you cannot get more out of the truth than what you put into it (13).

This text confounds the western tradition of historical narrative, not only in breaking from a strict sense of chronology, but also in forcing readers to recognize their role in constructing the shape of the text. Preliminary Note 3, "How to Use the Dictionary," offers readers suggestions

for the order in which they might read the text, though makes certain that we know "[the dictionary] can be read in a infinite number of ways. It is an open book, and when it is shut it can be added to" (11).

Any notion of a single, determinant meaning for the text as a whole gets stripped away as the novel defies any possibility of ascribing it to any individual author. The Preliminary Notes open with a reference to the mythic first edition of the book, published in 1691 by Daubmannus and destroyed by the Inquisition in 1692 except for a lethal copy printed on poisoned pages, and the "author"'s assurance to "the reader that he will not have to die if he reads this book" (1). The concept of an individual author soon fades since the current "edition" portrays itself as a reconstruction of all the previous accounts of Khazars and the people enmeshed in their history later on.

This trend begins at the end of the Preliminary Notes when the "author advises the reader not to tackle this book unless he absolutely has to" (14). The passage comes from "Preserved Fragments from the Introduction to the Destroyed 1691 Edition," so that the figure of authorship immediately slips from the contemporary author-creator, Milorad Pavic, to the fictive author, Joannes Daubmannus. As the three dictionaries progress, it becomes quite clear that the real history of the Khazars occurs not in the event itself, but in the various interpretations or excavations carried out by

various actors in different times and from different convictions. The various entries which claim an individual's part in authoring the text range through all three dictionaries and tend to occur on two levels: that of the chronicler and that of the writer.

The only immediate chronicler of the Khazar polemic, Methodius of Thessalonica, travelled with his brother to the debate when representatives from the three faiths argued for the souls of the Khazar empire. Although Methodius translated Cyril's "Khazar Orations" into slavonic, most of his works "have not been preserved in either the Greek or the Methodius' slavonic translation" (90). Thus, "the most important Christian source concerning the Khazar polemic remains the Slavonic hagiography of Constantine the Philosopher (Cyril), completed under the supervision of Methodius himself" (90). As the brother of Saint Cyril, the Christian representative to the Khazar polemic, Methodius the chronicler could represent something significant in the construction of the history of the Khazars, yet the text very carefully undercuts his authority. Since none of his actual writings remain, only work completed under his supervision-- a nebulous recognition of authority which could mean just about anything-- the Christian assertion of his date for the polemic, "861 A.D.," comes under suspicion. Moreover, the fact that the writings refer to the Islamic and Hebrew representatives as only "[Cyril's] unnamed opponents and

interlocutors" demonstrates the text's awareness of the way in which history selects information based on ideological grounds. The most prominent Christian source on the matter includes only information on the christian participants in the polemic, excluding the two other faiths' contributors. Essentially, this aspect of the novel concretizes Fredric Jameson's discussion of ideology and aesthetic in *The Political Unconscious*:

We may suggest that from this perspective, ideology is not something which informs or invests symbolic production; rather the aesthetic act is itself ideological, and the production of aesthetic or narrative form is to be seen as an ideological act in its own right... (79).

Methodius' hagiography of Cyril represents a narrative act committed under the auspices of Christian ideology, since it specifically ignores information pertinent to the polemic. The Islamic and Hebrew chroniclers are equally guilty of this necessarily ideological authoring of narrative.

Both Al-Bakri the Spaniard and Judah Halevi, the "principal" Islamic and Hebrew chroniclers of the polemic, respectively, lived in Spain in the tenth and eleventh centuries, and so have their reports come under suspicion due to the significant difference in space-- transcontinental-- and time-- two or three centuries (133, 244). Al-Bakri's entry in the dictionary acknowledges several other Islamic

references to the Khazars, but claims that "they are incomplete and not always clear whether they refer to the Khazars' conversion to Judaism, to Christianity, or to Islam" (133). In fact, Al-Bakri's report seduces readers into believing his version not only by filtering out potentially inaccurate, and ideologically incorrect, Islamic histories, but by acknowledging the other two faiths as strong actors. Although the names of the participants in the Khazar Polemic remain conspicuously absent, the spaniard gives an alternate date, "763," and claims that the Khazars "never really abandoned Islam, although they went on to convert to Christianity and then to Judaism" (135). Al-Bakri's history manipulates other versions of the history, the antithetical Christian and Hebrew sources, to create a viable account of the polemic using their assertions that either the Christian or Hebrew representative won the debate to set up his own. He offers "proof" that "the last Khazar kaghan converted back to the faith that had originally been adopted and espoused Islam, as Ibn al-Athir recorded so well," using an Islamic source that has been denigrated as unreliable (135).

Halevi's work further problematizes the history as it "posits the arguments of Isaac Sangari, the Hebrew participant, against the anonymous Islamic and Christian participants" (247). In this entry, the last of the three references to the chroniclers of the Khazar polemic, the text closes the circle. The three versions of the history

directly contradict each other by asserting the transcendent history of their ideology over the other two. To follow up with White's consideration of historical narrative as a moralizing event, the three versions of the history of the Khazars each assert their own cultural dominants in their conclusion. Borrowing Jameson's terms, the three chronicles do not reach different interpretations of the same event or simply inform ideology in the act of interpretation, but assert contrary histories based in the act of an ideological narrativization.

When interest in the Khazars reemerges in the seventeenth century, all three dictionaries offer their faiths' primary actors in the era as "one of the authors [or writers] of this book" (24, 160, 210). The phrase works metafictionally, as the text recognizes its inception, to tangle further the notion of reader, author, and text in historical narrative. At each occurrence, the phrase makes clear that there is no single author of the text, emphasizing the point that neither Pavic, who suggests his presence in the text as a creator in the introduction, nor Daubmannus, who is universally acknowledged as the compiler of the 1691 edition, can claim an over-riding (author)ity in the text. Each of the three historians from whose research Daubmannus worked in writing the early edition retains a measure of prestige as far as the dictionary goes.

Moreover, the Christian historian, Avram Brankovich, the Islamic, Yusuf Masudi, and the Hebrew, Samuel Cohen, are intimately connected with each other. Brankovich, a Walachian (Serbian) diplomat in Constantinople, becomes fascinated with the Khazars and hires Masudi as one of his scribes, who describes their work:

It is my impression that this whole affair-- involving Kuros [Cohen's double in Brankovich's dreams] and that fellow Judah Halevi-- is directly tied in with a project my lord Brankovich and we, his servants, have been working on for years. This is a glossary, or an alphabetized list, that could be called *The Khazar Dictionary*. He has been working on it tirelessly with a fixed goal. Brankovich had eight camel-loads of books brought to Constantinople from the Zarand district and from Vienna, and more are still arriving. He has sealed himself off from the world with walls of old dictionaries and manuscripts (45).

Even though it seems that Masudi functions as a mere employee serving Brankovich's pursuit of the history of the Khazars, Masudi's description in the Islamic dictionary reveals that he sought out Brankovich through dream hunting, a Khazar practice, in his own search for answers to the Khazar question. Masudi reads an old Islamic source and wonders why no mention is made of the Christian or Hebrew representatives

to the polemic, only to Farabi Ibn Kora, the Islamic "winner" of the debate:

Perhaps the only way to compile a Khazar encyclopedia or dictionary on the Khazar question would be to assemble all three stories about the three dream hunters and obtain one truth? Then *The Khazar Dictionary* could alphabetize certain entries with the names and biographies of the Christian and Jewish participants in the Khazar polemic, those from the Jewish and Greek sides (169).

In his work for Brankovich, Masudi follows up his own interests in writing a dictionary of the Khazars.

Cohen, the Jew, is also fascinated by the Khazar question. Puzzled by Halevi's omission of non-Hebrew information, he "had gone a step further by trying to find out more about Halevi's unnamed Christian and Islamic participants in the Khazar polemic" (227). Drawn in by his fascination and dreams of an unknown Christian, Brankovich, Cohen seeks him out, just as Masudi, dreaming of them both and equally perplexed, seeks out the pair.

When their quests finally come together and the three meet on a battlefield by the Danube at "a hill called Rs where rain never fell," all three die on "September 25, 1689" (55, 160, 210). Just as their mutual journey to create an accurate dictionary comes to a possible end, it seems that

they cannot bring it to closure. Their failed attempt to bring their work together, finally, can result in nothing, for it would have imposed, in White's words, "the formal coherency that only stories possess" (White 16).

The two types of history that each dictionary includes, i.e., the older, Medieval chronicles, and the more developed, seventeenth century search after a reasonably objective "truth," demonstrate a postmodern recognition of a need for diversity in discourse and the inaccessibility of history.

Linda Hutcheon says of postmodern novels:

Historiographic metafiction espouses a postmodern ideology of plurality and recognition of difference; 'type' has no function here, except as something to be ironically undercut. There is no sense of cultural universality (Hutcheon 114).

In admitting each faith's original chronicle as an equally viable version of Khazar history, the text recognizes each of the three dominant discourses, Christian, Hebrew, and Islamic, as a legitimate voice about the Khazars, yet undercuts those narratives' attempts at creating objective chronicles of the events.

When the text moves forward into the beginnings of the modern era, when the seventeenth century historians espouse the value of scientific objectivity even as they remain trapped in their religiously ideological mind-set, the text again recognizes each ideological stance's right to speak on

the Khazars. Brankovich, Cohen, and Masudi fail in their attempt to refine the process and come up with an objective history which takes other sources on the issue into account, which was missing in the purely ideological chronicles. They have no chance to come to any real "truth" on the matter. Once they try to escape the limits of their writing and realize history in textual form, they all die, and their tripartite version remains unfinished. Thus, the text recognizes its inability to represent history directly. As Jameson puts it:

One does not have to argue the reality of history: necessity, like Dr. Johnson's stone, does that for us. That history-- Althusser's 'absent cause,' Lacan's "Real"-- is not a text; for it is fundamentally non-narrative and nonrepresentational; what can be added, however, is the proviso that history is inaccessible to us except in textual form, or in other words, that it can be approached only by way of its prior (re)textualization (Jameson 82).

The three historians learn this lesson, when they try to go beyond the texts that they have at their disposal in an attempt to gain access to the history of the Khazars.

The trio remain blind to the ideological nature of the original chronicles, moreover, in that they accept without question, each for his own faith, that their respective

representative to the polemic won the contest. In their failure to see the distinction between the necessarily narrativized and moralizing text about an event and that event itself, they die in the face of the impossible nature of their quest. Only Daubmannus, in his collection of the three major sources on the Khazars two years after their death, can piece together a publishable version. His dictionary regards the three ideologies as separate but equal. As preserved in the contemporary "edition," the fragmentary nature of *Dictionary of the Khazars* safeguards each ideological standpoint without trying to resolve the history into a continuous narrative.

Daubmannus further complicates the relation of author, text, reader, and event as he sets up an analogy in the original fragments saved in the introduction:

2. Imagine two men holding a captured puma on a rope. If they want to approach each other, the puma will attack, because the rope will slacken; only if they both pull simultaneously on the rope is the puma equidistant from the two of them. That is why it is so hard for him who reads and him who writes to reach each other: between them lies a mutual thought captured on ropes that they pull in opposite directions (14).

Applied to the text in which this metaphor operates, it

implies that events only hold a position through the efforts of both author and reader. The heart of the matter, the puma, remains inaccessible, since neither reader nor author may approach the middle without committing suicide, as did Masudi, Cohen, and Brankovich, who confused their roles as readers of older historical narratives and writers of new ones. Only in maintaining an individual direction, or pull, on the text in either intent or interpretation can the event remain observable, albeit through the agency of a text. The tension in the line, keeping event at bay through the creative effort of both author and reader, represents the text's role in maintaining a safe distance from event while still representing event within the bounds of discursive adequacy.

In its continued attack on the possibility of complete, objective representation of event, *Dictionary of the Khazars* offers another possibility inherent to the dangers of confusing text with history. Nikolsky observes:

Every writer can with no trouble kill his hero in two lines. To kill a reader, someone of flesh and blood, it suffices to turn him for a moment into the hero of the book, into the protagonist of the biography. The rest is simple... (307).

Nikolsky's theory works only in the case that a reader adopts text as reality. Like the reader who lets the tension on the line go and attempts to approach an inevitably inaccessible

event, paying for that mistake in the jaws of Daubmannus' puma, the murderous author relies on blurring the border between closed, flawed narrative and history. The appendix thus serves to emphasize the ineluctable gap between history and its narrative representations.

Dictionary of the Khazars argues against the possibility of historical narrative creating anything but an ideological portrait of a given set of events. The novel asserts the valuable role of individual authors and readers coming to their own interpretations, however lodged in sectarian thought they may be. Totality has no place in interpretation here, for, as the text states of "essayists and critics, they are like cuckolded critics, always the last to know..."

(15).⁴ When approaching such a novel, it becomes virtually impossible to impose one all-inclusive meaning, making critics, in their old role as interpreters or high-priests of a closed meaning for either history or narrative, adversarial to the text. To consider narrative as anything more than a fictional construct, the result of a desire to impose on reality the same closure that is present in stories, also imposes the ideology which values a given interpretation of events.

Notes

1. The Khazars were a real people who, at the greatest extent of their loosely confederated empire, occupied land all along the northern coast of the Black Sea, East to the Caspian, and North along the Volga river almost as far as Estonia. The *Encyclopedia Britannica* asserts that "the most striking characteristic of the Khazars was the apparent adoption of Judaism by the kaghan and the greater part of the ruling class in about 740. The circumstances of this conversion remain obscure, the depth of their adoption of Judaism difficult to assess.... Whatever the case may be, religious tolerance was practiced by the Khazar empire.... Despite the relatively high level of Khazar civilization and the wealth of data about the Khazars that is preserved in Byzantine and Arab sources, not a single line of the Khazar language has survived" (*E.B.*, 836).

2. All subsequent references to *Dictionary of the Khazars* will appear in text.

3. Although Ateh in her testimony states: "I am Khazar," and thus resolves any doubts that she is, indeed, the same Ateh as the one for whom there are entries in each of the three dictionaries, she does not provide an exception to the rule that only hellish characters may act across the centuries (331). In order to avoid persecution at the hands of devils from the other two faiths, the devil from the winning faith

grants her immortality so that she will not have to end up in the others' hells.

4. I realize the paradoxical nature of my assertion here, that the novel avoids a single interpretation in the course of my interpretation, but my intention was not to resolve the novel into a single, seamless totality, only to explore the nature of such a narrative. This resistance to interpretation has caused the distinct lack of secondary sources on the novel. There is simply no criticism to be found.

IV. "Arrange It in Order": Dialogism and Historiography in Angela Carter's *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*

In his essay "The Politics of Historical Interpretation: Discipline and De-Sublimation," Hayden White suggests that "imagination is dangerous for the historian, because he cannot know that what he has imagined was actually the case" (White 67). He goes on to demonstrate how this creative element, however, must nonetheless play a role in the construction of historical narrative since the production of any narrative involves "'imagination,' precisely in the sense in which it is used to characterize the activity of the poet or novelist" (White 67). As historiography evolved into a discipline, the narratives that encode the meaning historians assign to bare sequences of events assimilated imaginative characteristics as a matter of course. White proffers an aesthetic, subjective facet inherent to the supposed objective nature of history as a discipline, pointing out that "since it is literary, the disciplinization of this aspect of the historian's work entails an aesthetic regulation" (White 68). The historian's task, even in its self-proclaimed objectivity, necessarily incorporates pure invention to produce a coherent narrative.

Exploring the way in which imaginative narratives

assimilate and dispute notions of history, Linda Hutcheon's theory of the postmodern novel describes what happens when novels address historiography. Freed from the prohibition on imagination that White examines, postmodern novels turn the situation back on itself to interrogate historical knowledge. In other words, without claiming the "real" as their referent, novels can revel in their creative capacity and problematize history instead of narrative. Developing her position in "Historicizing the Postmodern: The Problematizing of History," she points out that in "postmodern fiction, the literary and the historiographical are always being brought together--and usually with destabilizing, not to say unnerving, results" (Hutcheon 101). The essay leads up to an encapsulation of postmodern fiction:

...nowhere is it clearer than in historiographic metafiction that there is also a contradiction at the heart of postmodernism: the formalist and the historical live side by side, but there is no dialectic. The unresolved tensions of postmodern aesthetic practice remains paradoxes, or perhaps more accurately, contradictions (Hutcheon 100).

By leaving contradictions unresolved, postmodern fiction avoids the kind of false totalization that inscribes older forms of historical narrative within ideological infrastructures.

In *The Politics of Postmodernism*, Hutcheon names the

forms that contradiction takes in contemporary arts:

Whether it be in the photography of Victor Brugin or Barbara Kruger or in the fiction of John Fowles or Angela Carter, subjectivity is represented as something in process, never as fixed and never as autonomous, *outside history*. It is always a gendered subjectivity, rooted also in class, race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. And it is usually textual self-reflexivity that paradoxically calls these worldly particularities to our attention by foregrounding the doxa, the unacknowledged politics, behind the dominant representations of the self-- and the other-- in visual images or in narratives (Hutcheon [1989] 39-40, my *italics*).

By pointing out the wide variety of relations revealed in such narratives, Hutcheon adopts and expands Fredric Jameson's strictly Marxist description of "individual texts and cultural phenomena" as "*dialogical*," using Mikhail Bakhtin's term (84). Jameson asserts that dialogical, "antagonistic" relations inherent to narrative reveal class struggle: "... a ruling class ideology will explore the various strategies of the *legitimation* of its own power position, while an oppositional culture or ideology will... seek to contest or undermine the dominant 'value system'" (Jameson 84). Hutcheon's inclusion of other such relations, specifically gender, race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation,

offers a wider variety of ways to interpret contemporary texts in light of the context of their production and the various relationships within that context.¹

Moreover, in her observation that postmodern fiction leaves such tensions unresolved and, in fact, emphasizes them as paradoxes, she points out the way in which historiographic metafiction problematizes history. Foregrounding dialogic relations between different aspects of individuals in relation to their society, postmodern novels explore the way in which historical context determines the production of an imaginative text while making no claims to authoritative history. Reveling in paradox, these novels expose both historiography and narrative as functions of the ideologies that control the production of stories, not allowing either to hide behind a myth of closure. The tension Hutcheon explores between a subjective narrator and history exposes the dialogic nature to which Jameson alludes. Parallel to the class struggle he emphasizes, historiographic metafiction brings differences in gender, ethnicity, and sexual preferences to the surface, exploring the ways in which an individual subject relates to social norms as determined by the dominant ideology.

It is no mistake that Hutcheon often refers to Angela Carter's texts as examples of the paradoxical nature of historiographic metafiction. Epitomizing Hutcheon's description of a "destabilizing,... unnerving" fiction, *The*

Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman plays out all the tensions intrinsic to historical narratives. The novel opens with a brief introduction in which the narrator, Desiderio, introduces himself and his story. He begins with a bold claim:

I remember everything.

Yes.

I remember everything perfectly.

... Because I am so old and famous, they have told me that I must write down all my memories of the Great War, since, after all, I remember everything. So I must gather together all that confusion of experience and arrange it in order, just as it happened, beginning at the beginning (Carter 11).²

Through the extraordinary claim that he "remembers everything," Desiderio seeks to legitimize his text. This, he announces, will be a real history "just as it happened." Two paragraphs later, he asserts that he "became a hero" and "saved mankind," affirming importance for himself not just in relation to his narrative about the history of the war, but also to that history, itself. Yet, even as he stresses the accuracy of the narrative to come, he becomes embroiled in the paradox White introduces. In "arranging the events in order," Desiderio takes an active, imaginative role in constructing this history, no matter how impeccable his

memory. From the very opening of the narrative, before anything has even happened and Desiderio merely sets the scene for his history, there is a discrepancy between the claim for accuracy and the creative nature of narrative.

As the text moves into numbered chapters and Desiderio begins his story, he contradicts himself immediately. He opens "The City Under Siege" with a direct negation of the claim he makes in his introduction: "I cannot remember exactly how it began. Nobody, not even the Minister, could remember" (15). After stressing the integrity of his memory, how he remembers "everything perfectly," Desiderio debunks himself. In one sense, this moment of self-reflexive tension admits the narrator's shortcomings, thereby offering the illusion of a "realistic," fallible storyteller. In another, however, Desiderio points out the artificial nature of narrativizing events.

In his description of the process through which historical narratives select and order what they represent, White proposes that they must include an ordering principal external to their inception in the "real":

... events must be not only registered within the chronological framework of their original occurrence but narrated as well, that is to say, revealed as possessing a structure, and order of meaning, that they do not possess as a mere sequence (White 5).

Desiderio's difficulty in removing a single event from the

continuum of the past and endowing it with the quality of beginning the history he narrates reveals the way in which the process of narrativizing works. Desiderio cannot isolate a single moment when the war began out of the subtle, "scarcely perceptible changes" that Hoffman imposes on the world (15). Desiderio's hesitation to name one event as a "beginning" belies his incipient knowledge of the role that narrative plays in selecting and positioning events (White 14; Hutcheon 121). At this point in the text, Desiderio the hero conflicts with the narrative to come. Historical narrative, as Desiderio purports this will be, wrests events from a continuum to set them apart for "study." Desiderio, as a subject experiencing history, not a mere function of the dominant ideology, cannot himself determine an exact point to mark as "beginning."

As the introduction progresses, readers learn more about the war between the state, represented by Desiderio's boss, the Minister of Determination, and the renegade genius, Doctor Hoffman. The war boils down to a battle over what is "real" and what is not, the Minister, as his title implies, determining the limits of possibility and the Doctor creating things outside the limits set by the Minister.

Desiderio refers to Hoffman's illusions as the Doctor's "guerillas, his soldiers in disguise who, though absolutely unreal, nevertheless, were" (12). Clearly a follower of the ruling ideology as one of its principal agents, Desiderio

offers a strange contradiction. Since he acts as the Minister's agent and serves the dominant ideology, the narrative he creates comes out of that ideology. The narrative, however, as it relates the Minister's methods, problematizes historiography, since it refutes the possibility that what happens in the city actually occurs. Desiderio claims immunity "to the tinselled fallout from the Hoffman effect" and an ability to decide what is real and what is not, because, as he says, "I made my own definitions and these definitions happened to correspond to those that happened to be true" (13). Essentially, though, as the Minister's confidant, Desiderio's "definitions" correspond to what the Minister determines to be "true." Under the Minister's direct influence where he is content but bored, Desiderio cannot help but reflect the master system. In the absence of any counter-ideology, he sees no alternative to its tenets and has succeeded under its guidelines. The Doctor's attacks on the culture as a whole attack Desiderio as well, and his ideological stance dictates his immediate response as he sets out on his mission.

In the figure of the Minister, moreover, Desiderio offers another glaring contradiction, for he describes this man who establishes the standards by which all phenomena in the capital, where the novel opens, are judged as "not a man but a theorem, clear, hard, unified and harmonious" (13). In short, the Minister, even in the eyes of Desiderio, his best

indoctrinated delegate, becomes reduced to an abstraction, the theory or ideology he represents. He is nothing more than a cultural formulation since he conflates his role in society as governed by the dominant ideology with his personality. Desiderio perceives a significant contrast in him, for the Minister's principal dogma, empiricism and positivism, rely on immediate perception of the "concrete" world while he seems abstract in his stolid determination.

In the final paragraph of the introduction, Desiderio's remarks take a particularly metafictional turn:

... you must not expect a love story or a murder story. Expect a tale of picaresque adventure or even of heroic adventure, for I was a great hero in my time though now I am an old man and no longer the "I" of my own story and my time is past, even if you can read about me in the history books.... I will stand forever four square in yesterday's time, like a commemorative statue of myself in a public place, serene equestrian, upon a pediment (14).

In one fell swoop, he names the form the narrative will take and places it squarely in the discourse on the past. The allusion to picaresque and heroic fiction sets up the episodic nature of the narrative to follow, how each chapter contains a self-contained story within the story in serial form.³ Once he names the form his narrative will take, following Hutcheon's notion of a necessarily historic

subjectivity, Desiderio places the "I" of the narrative, the lens through which the narrative filters, in the past. The Desiderio who speaks in this introduction differs from the one who acted in the past. Though this one claims to be a hero in naming his narrative a heroic one, it is in fact the anterior Desiderio who acts heroically. His heroic qualities, moreover, are subject to ideological regulation. Like Aeneas's "virtu" in the *Aeneid*, Desiderio calls himself a hero because of his reason, his adherence to values dictated by society.

Hutcheon, in "Historiographic Metafiction: 'The Pastime of Past Time,'" says:

Historiographic metafiction... keeps distinct its formal auto-representation and its historical context, and in doing so problematizes the very possibility of historical knowledge, because there is no reconciliation, no dialectic here-- just unresolved contradiction (Hutcheon 106).

Desiderio's designation of his tale as "picaresque" or "heroic" remains separate from the historic time with which the narrative will deal. He creates a tension between the formal self-reflexivity of defining his narrative and the assertion of an ephemeral subjectivity in process. In naming the form his narrative will take and keeping the "I"s of present and past distinct, Desiderio calls his own narrative

into question. He relies heavily on memory, asserting it at the outset as the authority through which he will recount the story of the "Great War." However, the present Desiderio differs significantly from the past one, so that memory, the prerogative to recall history, comes into question.

Over the years, Desiderio has aged and effectively changed into someone new. He cannot, therefore, claim the perfect memory he posits, since that implies recalling someone else's experience. The "author" Desiderio speaks as a hero to his nation, one who upheld the dominant ideology, and calls his adventures "heroic," yet the significance of his story emerges in the tension between narrator and hero. In the essay "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity," Bakhtin insists that author and hero, creator and created, must remain separate in order for a novel to avoid being reduced to a treatise extolling a particular ideology:

What is constantly ignored in all such juxtapositions [conflating the two] is that the whole of the author and the whole of the hero belong to different planes--different in principle; the very form of the relationship to an idea and even to the theoretical whole of a world view is ignored.... What takes place nevertheless is what we call an incarnation of meaning in existence rather than the validation and demonstration of the truth of an idea (Bakhtin 9-10).

In the tension between the two Desiderios, Jameson's sense of

a dialogical relationship emerges in that the "author" Desiderio speaks with the voice of the dominant ideology while the character represents insurgent ones. Desiderio the author speaks from a set view with the same kind of monoglossic authority the Minister invokes in determining what is real. Desiderio the hero, on the other hand, remains free to evolve, like Hutcheon's subject, through history over the course of his adventures.

Introducing the context in which the narrative takes place, Desiderio describes the actors and their actions in the war. At one point he explains the Doctor's methods and strategies:

Consider the nature of a city. It is a vast repository of time, the discarded times of all the men and women who have lived, worked, dreamed and died in the streets which grow like a willfully organic thing... and yet lack evanescence so entirely that they preserve the past in haphazard layers.... Dr. Hoffman's gigantic generators sent out a series of seismic vibrations which made great cracks in the hitherto immutable surface of the time and space equation we had informally formulated in order to realize our city and, out of these cracks, well-- nobody knew what would come next (17).

In short, the Doctor's work does not attack all reality so much as the present. He liberates the past from linearity to

enter into the present, and his work defies possibility only to the extent that the dominant ideology insists phenomena occur in a rigid, linear sequence. What Hoffman unleashes, therefore, is not impossible, having occurred already, but it disturbs the empirical logic that the government upholds in that it does not coincide with their epistemology as determined by the Minister.

As the war progresses, "Past time occupied the city for whole days together, sometimes, so that the streets of a hundred years before were superimposed on nowadays streets" (21). Since "The Minister had never in all his life felt the slightest quiver of empirical uncertainty," he believes the only effective response to Doctor Hoffman's offensive must determine exactly what is and is not "rationally" possible (22). At that point, his counter-attack consists of cataloging the history of things:

he was engaged in the almost superhuman task of programming computers with factual data concerning every single thing which, as far as it was humanly possible to judge, had ever-- even if only once and that momentarily-- existed. Thus the existence of any object at all... could be checked against the entire history of the world and then be given a possibility rating. Once a thing was registered as 'possible,' however, there followed the infinitely more complex procedure designed to discover if it were probable

(24).

The Doctor's use of history calls the Minister's insistence on an empirical or determinist model of history into question. Since the Doctor creates fissures in the surface of the present to release pasts that lie buried in strata, the fact that the Minister denies certain phenomena probability or possibility based on his reckonings problematizes supposedly objective judgement. The narrative interrogates "objective" modes of historical knowledge, as it becomes clear that a historiography which seeks to catalog literally everything in an empirical mode does not recognize everything in that history. Since the Doctor's machines work by unleashing a buried past, denying the existence of things ignores both experience in the present and an emerging past. The citizens of the capital can see, hear, and touch the Doctor's illusions and respond to them accordingly. Classification of phenomena as "unreal" happens only in relation to the ideology under which the Minister acts. The Minister bans them from the realm of possibility on a theoretical level only, not a pragmatic one. He cannot do away with them altogether, merely exclude them, though that exclusion is enough to wage a war over.

The chapter closes with a conference between the Minister and Albertina, Desiderio's double throughout the novel, in disguise as an androgynous ambassador. In this discussion, the Ambassador states explicitly, "Dr Hoffman is coming to

storm the ideological castle of which at present, my dear Minister, you are king" (33). Her direct reference to the fact that the Minister's domain is entirely ideological belies the ideological nature of knowledge. Doctor Hoffman attacks not reality so much as the Minister's ideas about what constitutes that reality. The narrative reveals the war between the two sides, following Jameson's notion of a bitter, dialogical conflict based in ideology, to be a power struggle between the dominant ruling government represented by the Minister and a strong insurgency under the command of Doctor Hoffman.

When the text moves into its third episode, "The River People," Desiderio's narrative yields a cultural history of his country in which race becomes the focus of conflict. He opens the chapter with a brief, generic history of any Latin American country's colonization:

The Portuguese did us the honour of discovering us towards the middle of the sixteenth century but they had left it a little late in the day, for they were already past their imperialist prime and so our nation began as an afterthought, or footnote, to other, more magnificent conquests.... So they left it to the industrious Dutch a century later to drain the marshes and set up the intricate system of canals, later completed by the British, to which the country was to

owe much of its later wealth.... But it was principally the Ukrainians and the Scots-Irish who turned the newly fertile land into market gardens while a labour force of slaves, remittance men and convicts opened up the interior and a baroque architect imported for the purpose utilized their labours to build the capital... (67).

He goes on to describe how freed black slaves became the core of an "urban proletariat" while other European groups came to farm the countryside (69). Following that imposition of "a totally European façade on the inhospitable landscape," Desiderio narrates the history of the forgotten people of the country, the native Indians, who were slaughtered or died as a result of the colonial presence, so that their progeny became part of the racially mixed lower classes (68).

Describing himself in the introduction, Desiderio reveals his Indian lineage. Although he points out that the society as a whole tends to ignore the obvious fact of his ancestry revealed in his physical features, he nonetheless admits to being aware of that heritage:

since I was of Indian extraction, I suffered the ironic knowledge that my forefathers had anointed the foundations of the state with a good deal of their blood.

I was of Indian extraction. Yes. My mother came from feckless, middle-European stock and her business,

which was prostitution of the least exalted type, took her to the slums a great deal. I do not know who my father was but I carried his genetic imprint on my face... (16).

Following Desiderio's escape from a plot hatched against him in a resort town where he began his search for Doctor Hoffman's stronghold, the only surviving Indian tribe whose blood remains undiluted rescues and adopts him. Desiderio describes the River People as "the purest surviving strain of Indian... they lived secret, esoteric lives, forgotten, unnoticed" (70). These people, persecuted for 400 years, developed into an independent culture of the river. They took to barges, living their lives out as ferry-men and women transporting goods throughout the waterways which make up the main system of transport after the Doctor's machines make highways and railways virtually useless. Having no dealings except for brief business transactions with the heterogeneous European society on shore, Desiderio's Indian features convince Nao-Kurai and his family to adopt him as a lost member of their people.

Once he grows used to life on board the family barge, Desiderio remarks on the River People's culture:

Over the years, their isolated and entirely self-contained society had developed an absolutely consistent logic which owed little or nothing to the world outside and they sailed from ports to cities to

ports as heedlessly as if the waterways were magic carpets of indifference. I soon realized that they were entirely immune to the manifestations [created by Doctor Hoffman]. If the hawk-nosed, ferocious elders who handled their traditional lore said such a thing was so, then it was so and it would take more than the tricks of a cunning landlubber to shake their previous convictions (70).

In other words, their tight-knit community maintains its own system of authority. The ideological core of their culture, retained in secret over several centuries, remains strong enough to stay outside the battle between the empirical dominant represented by the Minister and the radical one by the equally foreign Doctor Hoffman, though it ravages the country around them.

Linguistically, the River People differ from the forces of European occupation, and this difference informs the way they view the world:

The tenses divided time into two great chunks, a simple past and a continuous present. Neither contained further temporal shading.... There was also a marked absence of abstract nouns, since they had very little use for them. They lived with a complex, hesitant but absolute immediacy (71).

Having no conception of a past time except for a legendary past in their mythology and no need for the abstractions with

which the Europeans burden themselves, the River People do not have historical knowledge in the sense that their overlords do. That is not to say that they are a non-ideological culture, but rather that they exist in a world unto themselves in which the only significant matters have to do with day-to-day survival and the traditions of their culture. Instead of history viewed as an ordered progression of events over time with a discernible structure, the River People formulate it as myth; it gives them a set of analogies they use as models for their behavior. Since it remains wholly alien to their world view, the epistemological struggle around them cannot invade their culture, fortified through four centuries of oppression and secret autonomy.

Desiderio, adopted for his physical features as one their own, finds a place among the people. After a period of time, he disregards his mission and feels that he will never leave the River People, having found a home for the first time in his life:

This sense of suspended time comforted me. It made me feel that the capital, the war and the Minister had never existed, anyway. I had quite forgotten my black swan and the ambiguous ambassador [two manifestations of Albertina, his double] for I had come back to my people (77).

In short, Desiderio forgets the war that led him to the people, as well as his desire for Albertina which functions

as another motivating force for his adventures, when he enters into a new society. Indian beliefs do not openly encounter the dominant ideology of the nation, so much as they, working under systematic oppression, mark out and maintain their own sphere of influence. No matter how limited by their geographic or economic position, the River People have found a successful way to stave off the dominant ideology. Not seeking to change or overthrow society as a whole, they enjoy their autonomy.

In discussing "The River People," Hutcheon describes them as "the extreme of... ex-centric ethnicity" (Hutcheon 71). Examining this ex-centric quality in light of her point about subjectivity, the text enacts a theoretical position as Desiderio's immersion into the culture changes his perspective.⁴ Forgetting his mission and briefly losing his culturally determined beliefs, he enters into a world of others and adapts to their way of life. His subjectivity remains bound to context; he evolves as time progresses and his situation changes. As Desiderio adopts the River People's world view just as they have adopted him, he comes into tension with the dominant ideology. In discovering the ethnic and racial subjectivity of his roots, he must refute his European-educated background. At this point in the text, Desiderio the character comes into conflict with the one who authors the text. Since the latter remains in stasis outside

the setting of the narrative, the former's evolution demonstrates the way in which a subject evolving through history stands in dialogic relation to the ideology producing the narrative of that history. Determining the exact nature of that tension depends on the subject's position in relation to society. In this extreme case, Desiderio stands outside his once and future society as an ethnic other, and the tension he experiences between the ideologies of the River People and the forces of the government comes as a result of his shift to the Indian way of life.

Unfortunately, his sojourn among the River People is cut short. When Desiderio demonstrates a quality they do not possess and are not likely to obtain in their rigid isolation, the ability to read, Nao-Kurai and his family realize that his knowledge means power to them. Desiderio reads a manifest and reveals how a shore merchant, a European, has swindled the Indians (77-79). Since they have no mind for learning to read themselves, they hatch a plot taken from their mythology. The River People believe that fire came to the Indians when they ate a snake who knew how to make fire (88-90). Without a sense of history, of a systematic progression through time, that story informs the way they believe one acquires knowledge; it acts as their sole precedent for learning. The narrative of the snake legitimatizes their belief that to eat Desiderio would give them all the ability to read and deal on equal terms with the

merchants and tradespeople of the countryside.⁵

Desiderio, who learns about this plot when his adoptive father becomes drunk and tells him the myth, escapes, but not before he assimilates a valuable lesson (91-92). Even though he was happy among the Indians and felt as though he was among his own, Desiderio cannot escape the fact of his difference. To the tribe, he remains a product of another culture. The Indians are caught in the double-bind of wanting to learn how to read without encumbering themselves with the rest of European culture. Faced with this dilemma, they must turn to their mythic precedent, the lesson from a removed past, to find a solution that will allow them to gain the knowledge they seek without the need to deal with other, potentially dangerous aspects of a society that has sought to exterminate them. Without a way to resolve the conflict between his new, Indian self and his education in a western culture, Desiderio decides to escape. He loses the easy familiarity he found among the River People but survives, and his narrative, his history of the war, continues.

After his "timeless" sojourn on the river, Desiderio resumes his adventures as the text moves toward its eventual conclusion in the Doctor's castle. The final episode in the novel, "The Castle," finds Desiderio paired with Albertina returning to her father's stronghold as a converted member of the opposition. The two have been lost for a while, ever since a wild storm destroyed the circus which contained the

Doctor's "samples," and have travelled to Africa and through a period called "Nebulous Time." In the helicopter home, Albertina explains what has happened in their absence:

...the Minister completed his computer bank and then instituted a programme he called the Rectification of Names. In spite of himself, he was forced to use philosophical weapons-- or, as he would probably prefer to call them, ideological weapons. He decided he could only keep a strict control of actualities by adjusting their names to agree with them perfectly, So, you understand, that no shadow would fall between the word and the thing described.... So he dismissed all his physicists and brought in a team of logical positivists from the School of Philosophy in the National University and set them to the task of fixing all the phenomena compiled by his computers in the solid concrete of a set of names that absolutely agreed with them (194).

The Minister's plan, the seemingly objective goal of reconciling reality with representation, seeks the impossible. His attempt to transcend the inherent difference between a thing and its linguistic representation, forces the Minister to assert a totalizing ideological frame which erases the difference between the sign and the signified. Since his method insists on creating a complete inventory of all things that have ever been, the Minister's task is

necessarily historical. Desiderio names the school of thought-- "logical positivism"-- through which the Minister and his agents have sought to determine a principle by which they can judge reality. The Minister's goal of creating a unified, total vision is a monoglossic enterprise, however, which must fail. Even as the Minister puts all the weapons of his ideology to the test, Doctor Hoffman's strategies continue to work, despite the fact that his "samples," his most effective "guerillas," were lost in a terrific storm, as he prepares to launch his "second front" (119-120, 194).

White, in his essay "The Politics of Historical Interpretation," describes how attempts like the Minister's have worked in western culture:

The purpose of such a discipline [of scientific history] would simply be to determine the "facts" of history, by which to assess the objectivity, veridicality, and realism of the philosophies of history that authorized political programs. Under the auspices of the philosophy of history, programs of social and political reconstruction shared an ideology with utopian visions of man, culture, and society. This linkage justified both and made a study of history, considered as a recovery of the facts of the past, a social desideratum at once epistemologically necessary and politically relevant (White 61).

Clearly, the Minister's response to the social crisis his

government faces involves the resolute assertion of one vision of history. As that viewpoint assumes an objective stance, however, the novel foregrounds its ideological base. The Minister's stance can be nothing more than one interpretation, however complete it seeks to be, of what constitutes historical fact.

Desiderio concedes that he, too, would like to conform wholly to the authoritarian project but feels desires which keep him from doing so: "I, too, would have worshipped reason if I could ever have found her shrine. Reason was stamped into me as if it were a chromosome, even if I loved the high priestess of passion [Albertina]" (195). Although the narrative created by Desiderio the author eventually serves to describe the Minister's "victory," Desiderio the hero experiences the dialogical relationship between himself as an individual subject and his chosen ideology. Though the monoglossic vision of the dominant ideology will "win" the war and remain in place, it will never erase the conflicts it has with the individuals, particularly Desiderio, under its sway. Desiderio's unavoidable desire for something to complement the reason for which he strives assures an ongoing paradox and dialogue.

As the counter-point to the Minister's resolved position, Desiderio describes Doctor Hoffman's castle. In direct opposition to what readers might have expected as the capital

of anti-reason, we find that "Here [in the castle], everything was safe. Everything was ordered. Everything was secure" (197). Desiderio recounts the atmosphere in the Doctor's home as "the disciplined presence of the utterly irrational" (199). The Doctor battles society as methodically as the Minister counter-attacks. The pair share a desire to assert their own world views as the cultural dominant, and Desiderio puzzles at the differences between them boiling down to essentially factual differences. The Minister's revolution would not change the shape of society as a whole; it would simply replace the center of power, the authority to make decisions and determine what is "true":

All that puzzled me were certain pictures on the wall.... When I read the titles engraved on metal plaques at the bottom of each frame, I saw they depicted such scenes as "Leon Trotsky composing the Eroica Symphony".... Van Gogh was shown writing *Wuthering Heights* in the parlour of Haworth Parsonage, with bandaged ear, all complete. I was especially struck by a gigantic canvas of Milton blindly executing divine frescoes on the walls of the Sistine Chapel. Seeing my bewilderment, Albertina said, smiling: "When my father rewrites the history books, these are some of the things that everyone will suddenly perceive to have always been true" (197-8).

Hutcheon refers to this moment in *The Infernal Desire*

Machines of Doctor Hoffman as an example of the “destabilizing, not to say unnerving, results” of bringing historiography and fiction together (Hutcheon 101). The Doctor merely presents another form of historical knowledge, problematizing both his and the Minister’s concepts of history. Confronted with two antithetical visions of history, Desiderio calls both into question as they rely on oppositional interpretive strategies. Both are monoglossic, and Desiderio, moving through history, stays in tension with them.

Brought to the bowels of the castle, Albertina and the Doctor show Desiderio the machinery they use to transform the world and which he describes as “all technological whiteness and silence” (209). Confronted with the machines, Desiderio finds himself caught between two poles:

I found the paraphernalia of the Doctor’s science disgusted me when I saw it face to face.... I knew he could never be my master. I might not want the Minister’s world but I did not want the Doctor’s world either. All at once I was pitched on the horns of a dilemma, for I was presented with two alternatives and it seemed to me that the Doctor must be wrong for neither alternative could possibly co-exist with the other. He might know the nature of an inexhaustible plus but, all the same, he was a totalitarian (207).

In this instant, Desiderio comes to a conclusion about the

nature of historiography. He sees at once how historical knowledge implies the ideology which allows it to exist. In rejecting both the Doctor and the Minister, he finds that each paradoxically represents something at once abhorrent and desirable to him, both imply ideological positions, and not any sort of absolute. The two seek complete authority and cannot, therefore, exist in the same sphere.

As a subject, Desiderio, whose name translates as both the "desired one" and the "one who desires," the two ideologies compete for his complete subservience even as he longs for certain aspects of each and rejects others. Playing out this tension, however, the text comes to a false sense of closure found only in narrative, not in the "real." White describes the process of narrativizing history as "an imposition, upon events that are represented as real, of the formal coherency that stories possess" (White 21). "The Castle" enacts narrative's necessary closure as the text reverts to metafiction when Desiderio makes his decision:

Well, you know the choice I made. Nothing in this city quarrels with its name.... When I finish this chapter, they will bring me a cup of hot milk and digestive biscuits.... But there I go again-- running ahead of myself! See, I have ruined all the suspense. I have quite spoiled my climax. But why do you deserve a climax, anyway? I am only trying to tell you exactly, as far as I can remember, what actually happened. And

you know very well already that it was I who killed Doctor Hoffman; you have read about it in the history books... (207-8).

In calling out to readers' supposed knowledge of this history, of a "real" outside the text, the narrative asserts its ideological function. Despite the fact that Desiderio plays down the notion of a climax, the narrative nevertheless comes to a close as Desiderio kills both Hoffman and Albertina in securing the Minister's dominion.

Portraying the Doctor as a totalitarian legitimizes the decision that Desiderio makes. Brought before machines where he and Albertina will consummate their desire for each other and push the scales in the Doctor's favor, Desiderio instead opts to fulfill his mission for the government and kills the two, winning the war for the side of "reason." In that moment, the narrative aligns itself once and for all with the government's authority, projecting it from that historical moment into the present. Calling on readers' "knowledge" of the event, the narrative relies on our recognition that Desiderio made the "right" choice in bringing us through the war to this point, somewhere posterior to the events represented in the novel.

As he concludes, however, Desiderio escapes totalizing the narrative as he expresses a personal regret. The last line of the novel finds Desiderio putting down his pen, saying

"Unbidden, she comes" (221). In Albertina, he met his perfect double and still desires her, yet he deliberately asserts that he feels "regret," not "remorse." In other words, the narrative closes with the paradoxical knowledge that having done the "right" thing, in concluding the narrative in favor of the Minister's ideology, and his as author, he loses the chance to consummate his perfect desire.⁶ In doing so, Desiderio selects what he believes to be a higher moral; he places the "good" of society over his own. As all narratives must, Desiderio's narrative enforces the dictates of his ideological position.

Desire must remain unconsummated, however, for it to stay in effect. In its final move, *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* enacts one of Bakhtin's assertions. He writes, "If I am consummated and my life is consummated, I am no longer capable of living and acting. For in order to live and act, I need to be unconsummated, I need to be open to myself" (Bakhtin 13). Even as the text comes to a sense of closure in the victory over Hoffman, Desiderio once and for all keeps himself in dialogical relation to the dominant ideology and his text as a whole. Though the narrative may assert closure and enforce an ordering principal based in the dominant ideology, he maintains his integrity as an individual subject in history.

Notes

1. The majority of scholarship on Carter's fiction focuses primarily on the issues of gender and sexuality. Articles which engage *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*, a title which Elaine Jordan calls an "outrageous imposition" and which I will use as sparingly as possible, range from Paulina Palmer's dismissal of the text as "chauvinistically male" in its view point as it portrays "atrocities" whose inclusion she cannot "justify... in the text" to Brooks Landon's reduction of all Carter's fiction to "the implication of mythology vis-à-vis Western civilization's view of women" (Jordan [1990] 31; Palmer 190; Landon 67). For the purposes of this argument, especially as it relates to my thesis as a whole, I take refuge in Jordan's assertion that: "it is not essential for a feminist writer to assume naive readers, or for every reader to see all possible readings" (Jordan [1992] 122). Certainly, Carter was concerned with such issues, but in emphasizing gender and sexuality, critics have left other aspects of the individual in relation to society open for discussion.
2. All subsequent references to *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* will appear in text.
3. Jordan likens Desiderio and his serial adventures to "the passive hero of Scott's novels, who is put through certain phases for the instruction of the reader" (Jordan [1992]

122). She goes on to assert a "strong, linear drive" that never moves "toward conclusion and resolution" (123).

Although her point is well taken, I will argue that, while this text avoids "consummation," to use Bakhtin's term, for its hero, it does offer an illusory closure in the Minister's victory. In addition, Jordan recasts the novel as a sweeping "history of Reason and Desire in literary and philosophic representation from the Enlightenment through to psychoanalysis and its post-romantic consciousness of the unconscious" (Jordan [1990] 34). In doing so, she offers the sense of a Foucauldian project inherent to the novel.

4. Although we usually think of literary theory and practice as separate entities relating to each other through criticism, Carter's fiction openly incorporates theoretical positions. Following Hutcheon's assertion that "in postmodern fiction... theory interpenetrates with narrative," *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* foregrounds contests between ideologies and must, therefore, introduce the theoretical positions underlying those ideologies (Hutcheon 99).

5. Jordan casts the episode among the River People as a kind of anti-Utopian vision in which "ritual and social practice offer no space for individual doubt and speculation" (Jordan 1990, 34). Although this point is certainly true, it does not stand in conflict with either the Minister's vision for society or the Doctor's, both dystopias in their own right,

since all the cultures in the novel seek to assert the social norms dictated by their ideology.

6. David Punter recognizes the "subversion of narrative" that reaches its climax in the tension between Desiderio as both author and hero, but likens it to "the thanatic impulse" (Punter, 213). The bulk of Punter's essay on Carter's fiction, "Angela Carter: Supercessions of the Masculine," explores the "interplay" he sees between "Freud and Reich which forms the underpinning of the text" (209). Although he does explore historicity, he lodges it in Desiderio's unconscious, calling Desiderio "a representation of a historically specific type of alienated consciousness" (211). Punter's thought, tending toward psychoanalytic theory, joins the debate in progress over the roles that gender and sexuality play in the novel, and avoids other crucial elements at work.

V. Conclusion

In a recent New York Times Book Review, Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson relates an anecdote about a gorilla named Michael who learned American Sign Language. When asked why Michael signed that he felt sad, the ape replied that he remembered hunters killing his mother to capture him when an infant in Africa (Masson 11). Although the story is brief, it speaks to the idea that almost all history remains inaccessible. If Michael had remained silent or, more likely, had never learned to express his loss, that memory would have disappeared

In historical narratives, we have access only to those views of history that have had access to expression, and ideology is a determining factor in that process. Whether through direct suppression under a totalitarian regime or the subtle manipulations of allegedly "free markets" under capital, dominant ideology sanctions and promotes certain expressions and attempts to silence others. The forms and content that cultural products take come out of a matrix dictated at any given time by an authoritarian ideology. A literary text, or any other cultural artifact, reveals the shape of power relations at the time of its generation. Those texts that openly reinforce dominant ideology have broader access to form than those that oppose or question the

prevalent system. Simply put, artifacts that convey prevailing viewpoints circulate more often and more widely than those that dissent.

Western historians have claimed an objective stance in their representations of the past that they cannot possibly attain. Though the discipline has developed a model in which they claim to work in the "real" and translate it into a meaningful structure from which to learn, the narratives they create and the structure they impose on history forces them to resort to imagination. In attempting to discover what causes events to happen, what structure gives them discernible meaning, historians privilege certain modes of thought and inflict them upon history. Events cannot stand alone. In representing history, whether by individual participants or "objective" reconstruction through common historiographic practices, events stand in dialogue with the people who portray them. In other words, events cannot remain pure, as each individual recollection or representation involves difference. Unfortunately, we cannot escape from this dilemma and simply let events "be." To do so would get rid of historiography altogether since it relies on narrative to express its findings and give them structure.

Postmodern novels address this issue another way. In making no claim to referents in the "real," they avoid imposing an imaginary structure upon it. The whole of any given novel is fictional, so that the problematic

relationship of a text built from imagination upon a bedrock of "reality" never arises. Instead, historiographic metafiction pulls the process of narrating events into the open where readers can examine it for themselves.

Emphasizing the necessarily ideological nature of narrative, novels like *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, *Dictionary of the Khazars*, and *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* keep historiographical and narrative elements distinct from each other so that we may read them without resorting to a myth of closure, of creating a dialectic in which history and narrative work with each other to synthesize a higher meaning or absolute truth.

When closure does occur at the end of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, for example, as the novel closes down with the final Aureliano Buendía reading his own demise at the end of his family history, the novel collapses in upon itself as history and text coincide. Stories end; history does not. Narratives must, therefore, remain distinct from "reality." Reading Melquíades's parchments, Aureliano conflates history and narrative and, with no other Buendías left to carry on, that history cannot continue. The novel ends with the idea that "everything written on [the parchments] was unrepeatable since time immemorial and forever more, because races condemned to one hundred years of solitude do not have a second opportunity on earth" (Marquez 382). Though it may be narrativized and made comprehensible in textual form, history

as a whole, as a structure driven process, remains inaccessible.

So, too, in *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*, Desiderio fulfills narrative requirements by concluding his story with the Minister's victory over Hoffman's coup, but leaves his own desire unconsummated. In this case, Desiderio the author asserts the power of the dominant ideology over its rival, but leaves the individual subject open-ended, unclosed. Desiderio the hero desires Albertina despite the dictates of his mission and serves as a reminder that a person remains in process, outside the static structure imposed by ideology, and so acts as an other to the closed system that ideology implies. The historical aspect of the text achieves a superficial closure, but individual aspects continue on. In ending with the line, "Unbidden, she comes," Desiderio's narrative asserts a process outside his control (Carter 221). Like the Doctor's "illusions" that started the war, Desiderio's desire, a force that has shaped the course of his adventures, remains autonomous. Intractable desire returns the novel to its starting point and the narrative is set to begin anew. In this case, history evades being defined as a observable process, moving instead through circles driven by forces beyond human apprehension.

Finally, *Dictionary of the Khazars* refuses conventional notions of narrative as a set, linear process. Instead, the

novel forces readers to construct their own readings, selecting the order in which they read individual entries. Since the novel has an infinite number of possible forms, no one reading can achieve final closure or set meaning. So, too, in having three named ideologies, Christian, Islamic, and Jewish, reach different conclusions about what "really" happened, the novel emphasizes history's unattainable distance from the text. In the novel, both narrative and history resist the possibility of closure.

Finally, then, these three novels force us to distinguish more carefully the difference between history and imaginative narrative. Confusing the imaginative nature of narrative with reality serves only to further the ideology which generated the norms under which the narrative was written. Postmodern novels do not require that we forego the pleasure of reading or the value of history, but rather that we keep our critical faculties open, engage with both fiction and history on our own terms, and retain a sense of the complex web of relations among history, narrative, and self.

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